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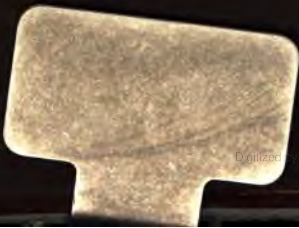
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SOCIETY MEETINGS  
IN  
WESLEYAN METHODISM.

BY THE  
REV. JOS. PORTREY.



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1874.

TO THE REVEREND  
GEORGE CLOUGH HARVARD,  
MY CONSTANT AND FAITHFUL FRIEND AND FELLOW-LABOURER  
IN THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST,

*This Volume is Inscribed*

WITH THE WARMEST AFFECTION OF

THE AUTHOR.

## P R E F A C E.

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I OFFER no apology for publishing "Society Meetings in Wesleyan Methodism." It is a subject which has been interwoven into my spiritual life from its very beginning, and one whose benefits have been of greater value to me than I can possibly express. "Village Methodism" is that of which I make my boast, having been cradled and nursed therein during my early religious history. The visits we received from the "Travelling Preachers" were mostly confined to the week-day evenings, their labours being urgently required in the larger places. We had no towns in the whole Circuit, but there were large and important congregations and Societies needing special pastoral attention, so that the smaller ones (one of which was my own) had to be content with the occasional visits referred to.

The ministers, however, took care that every lack was supplied, as far as it was practicable to do so; and the week-night services consisted, not unfrequently, of preaching and the Society Meeting. Their

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labours were abundant, but they faithfully discharged the duties which their high calling imposed upon them in every particular. I have had occasion again and again to revere their memory, and I can never forget the obligations under which I am laid to Christ and His cause, through their pious care and attention.

To show how fully the subject is an essential part of Methodism, I will take the liberty of giving an extract from an article in the "Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine" for 1861, to the whole of which I should like to call special attention. "Mr. Wesley's Journal stretches over the first half century of our existence, and nearly fifty years beyond the first Methodist Conference. In it we find the servant of Christ 'in labours more abundant,' during an extraordinary length of time. We see in him a deep penetration, a sound judgment, a store of various knowledge, a large acquaintance with human nature, a cool self-possession, a singleness of eye, an elevation of character above all that was low and selfish, and a dignity of soul which nothing but a rich supply of the



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grace of God could impart. His Journal will delight and instruct generations to come, in this and in many lands. It is so rich in correspondence and biography, in notices of natural history, of literature, of singular occurrences, of remarkable answers to prayer, and a vast range of other matters, that it is hard to name a topic on which it communicates no information. The style in which it is written is that of a man of extraordinary powers, born in the lap of learning, yet hallowed by deep humility and fervent devotion. Few men have been better qualified to judge of the work of God in the heart, or of the means by which that work is commenced and carried on. We turn respectfully to his Journal upon this point, and find that *one of the most powerful instrumentalities in the formation of Methodism was* THE SOCIETY MEETING."

"The ordinary records of his conduct for fifty years read thus:—'May 5th, 1745.—I afterwards met the Society, and exhorted them, in spite of men and devils, to continue in the grace of God.' 'Sunday, July 14th, 1745.—I preached at Stithians, and earnestly

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exhorted the Society not to think of pleasing men, but to count all things loss, so that they might win Christ.' 'May 7th, 1749.—We had a triumphant hour when the Society met.' 'July 3rd, 1749.—Almost every person who was present at the meeting of the Society appeared to be broken in pieces. And, shortly after, prayer was swallowed up in the voice of praise and thanksgiving.' 'September the 10th, 1749.—I met the Society at seven, and a glorious meeting it was. I forgot all my pain while we were praising God together.' 'Oct. 13th, 1749.—Such a flame broke out as was never there before. We felt such a love to each other as we could not express.' 'Sunday, June 30th, 1745.—We rejoiced together for an hour in such a manner as I had never known before in Cornwall.'"

With these extracts I close, and shall be thankful to God if this humble effort to revive and extend the holding of these meetings amongst us be but accomplished.

JOSEPH PORTREY.

Kingston-on-Thames,  
*July 16th, 1874.*

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# SOCIETY MEETINGS.

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No. I.

## PERSONAL GODLINESS.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

The system of Church polity which, as a body of Christians, we possess, ought to be highly prized for the means it supplies for our spiritual enjoyment and growth in grace. I have sometimes feared whether these privileges are sufficiently valued by our members, and whether they avail themselves of them as largely as they ought to do. I shall not, I hope, be considered as speaking too strongly, nor yet as depreciating other systems, if I express my belief in saying there is no other system equal to it in existence. In order, however, to *know* its real value, we must diligently use those

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means so as to feed and nourish our Christian life. And to stimulate ourselves to the performance of duty in this respect, is one object of our Pastoral relationship. I trust that the relationship thus formed between us will be greatly blessed to our mutual edification and comfort.

At this our first Society Meeting, then, let me direct your attention to the subject of *Personal Godliness*. This is a point, my dear friends, which must ever be regarded by us as *paramount*. "Christ in you the hope of glory whom we preach," must take precedence of everything else. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." "Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." (John iii. 3, 5.) Family privileges, social position, natural gifts cannot be of any avail here. "*I must be born again, or die to all eternity.*" Let us examine ourselves, then, to-night, and know what is our real state,—what is our individual condition. Do permit me to press this matter closely, so that you may have the certainty

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in yourselves that you have passed from death to life,—that you have the assurance of your acceptance with God. Don't rest, I implore you, without this. It is not a vain thing, for it is your life. Without this you are dead while you live.

The way of obtaining this blessing is by "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." (Acts xx. 21.) "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." (Luke xiii. 5.) "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord." (Acts iii. 19.) The gospel which is preached to you in this place with so much earnestness is, happily, calculated to produce this effect. No uncertain sound is ever heard from your pulpits, but the way of salvation is plainly and uniformly set forth therefrom. So that although the occupants may change, from time to time, yet the message which is delivered unto you is the same. However diversified are their gifts, they all preach "Christ crucified," "the power of God, and the wisdom of God." (1 Cor. i. 24.)

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And by receiving their message into your hearts, you have—

“ A pardon written with His blood,  
The favour and the peace of God ;  
The seeing eye, the feeling sense,  
The mystic joys of penitence :

“ The godly grief, the pleasing smart,  
The meltings of a broken heart ;  
The tears that tell your sins forgiven,  
The sighs that waft your souls to heaven :

“ The guiltless shame, the sweet distress ;  
The’ unutterable tenderness ;  
The genuine, meek humility ;  
The wonder, ‘ Why such love to me !’

“ The’ o’erwhelming power of saving grace,  
The sight that veils the seraph’s face ;  
The speechless awe that dares not move,  
And all the silent heaven of love.”

Having thus “received Christ Jesus the Lord,” your next concern is to “walk in Him; rooted and built up in Him.” (Colos. ii. 6, 7.) Now that the great enemy of your souls has lost you from his ranks, he will use every means he can command on purpose to harass and perplex



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you, and if possible to bring you again into bondage. As much, therefore, as you value your souls, and as much as you prize your holy religion, you must resolutely withstand his wicked devices, holding "fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." (Heb. iii. 6.) To do this effectually you will find the advantage of repairing often to the throne of grace, in order to obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. It will be well to habituate yourselves to this devout exercise of the heart, so as to be enabled to "keep yourselves in the love of God." In your daily life keep this matter constantly before you. Be as actively engaged in the world as your duty requires you to be; be as fervent in spirit as your souls' needs demand. Neither the one nor the other can be left undone without loss; they both can be attended to with profit and advantage. Your godliness will not hinder but help you in your worldly pursuits. By it, and by it alone, you will be able to use the world as not abusing it; and in thus using it you will bring honour

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to yourselves, benefit to your companions, and glory to God.

Then you will have need to "look to yourselves." Your own evil hearts must be constantly watched lest they should beguile you, and lead you astray. The risings of the carnal mind must be kept always in subjection. Passion and pride must be firmly dealt with and subdued, or they will become snares in your path, causing you much disquietude, as well as endangering your safety. "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law." (Gal. v. 17, 18.) This is the clear, distinct, unmistakable line of conduct which every godly person pursues. He is led of the Spirit; he has become spiritually-minded, and, as a consequence, has life and peace. And if we "walk in the Spirit" we "shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh." (Ver. 16.) "Slavery to the flesh, the world, and the devil," says Baxter, "is the mark that is written upon the ungodly; and

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Satan, the world, and the flesh have their service. If you are consecrated to God, and bear His name and mark upon you, tell every one that would lay claim to you, that you are His, and resolved to live to Him, to love Him, to trust Him, and to stand or fall to Him alone. Let God be the very life, and sense, and end of all you do." Be fixed in your purpose, unswerving in your course, and single in your aim. In all times of temptation look steadily to Him. Don't lean to your own understanding, but rely entirely on Him for grace to overcome. Be determined not to be conquered, but to conquer. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." (James iv. 7.)

Some of you, perhaps, have not long been brought to God; you have but recently passed from death to life,—but just begun your bright and glorious career. To you I should like to speak with great tenderness and affection. You know but little as yet, either the dangers to which you are exposed, or the method you can best adopt by which to escape them. To you the advice of an inspired Apostle is specially applicable,

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and I wish to commend it very earnestly to your consideration. "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." (1 Pet. ii. 2.) Now if you read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest this passage of holy Scripture, it will be of great service in establishing you in the grace wherein you now stand. "*The Word.*" This is your only guide, and it is *sure*. Never, therefore, neglect it. Don't allow a day to pass without its perusal. "Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever; for they are the rejoicing of my heart." "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." (Ps. cxix. 105, 111.) No such heritage as this is found elsewhere, nor is there any other light by which we can be guided into it. You have special need of understanding in the way that you go, for it is beset with difficulties. But "if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God." (Prov. ii. 4, 5.)

"*The Milk of the Word.*"—This is the

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aliment of your soul, by which it is to grow. It has been said to be compared to milk:—First, because of *the sweetness of it*: “Sweeter than honey and the honeycomb.” (Ps. xix. 10.) “How sweet are Thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!” (Ps. cxix. 103.) And again, “My son, eat thou honey, because it is good; and the honeycomb, which is sweet to thy taste: so shall the knowledge of wisdom be unto thy soul: when thou hast found it, then there shall be a reward, and thy expectation shall not be cut off.” (Prov. xxiv. 13, 14.)

Secondly. It is compared to milk again because of *its purity*. “Thy word is very pure: therefore Thy servant loveth it.” (Ps. cxix. 140.) “The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.” (Ps. xii. 6.) Not only has the word been *tried*, but it has been *tried by the severest test*. It has been “tried in a furnace of earth purified seven times.” It is worth your while to observe how this is spoken of in different parts of the holy Scriptures, so as to confirm

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you—if that were needed—in this precious truth. “The word of the Lord is tried: He is a buckler to all those that trust in Him.” (Ps. xviii. 30.) “Every word of God is pure: He is a shield unto them that put their trust in Him.” (Prov. xxx. 5.) As, therefore, we must be pure in heart in order that we may see God, this is the only means by which that purity can be obtained. An old writer (Manton) has remarked on this: “All other writings come as short of the Scripture as a coal doth of the sun. The whole art and design of this holy book is to advance the spiritual and heavenly life, and not to fashion our outward carriage a little for converse with men, but to bring us into fellowship and communion with God, and to direct us to do all things from holy principles, in a holy manner, to holy ends.”

Thirdly. It is compared to milk because of *its nourishing properties*. “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction . . . in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” (2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.)

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Thus you see that the strength by which we are to "grow" is derived from "*The Word*," and no one will wonder at our dwarfishness in the Divine life if we fail in securing it. Only by being constantly and well fed with this necessary and wholesome food can we grow up "as calves of the stall." See to it then, I entreat you, that your growth is daily, yea hourly. "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." (2 Peter iii. 18.)

*Let us pray.*

## No. II.

### CONTINUANCE IN WELL-DOING.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

My object in these Meetings is not to detain you to any undue length of time, but to lay before you as briefly as possible the counsels which as a Pastor I feel it my duty to press upon your attention. Hence my anxiety at our last Meeting was not to seem tedious, by entering so much into detail as the subject we then had under consideration would have warranted. My wish then was, and still is, to impress upon your minds the great importance of *the one thing needful*. Then, having obtained "peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ," my further wish is, that you should always bear in mind that it is by Him also that you "have access by faith into this grace wherein you stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." (Rom. v. 1, 2.) "The life which I *now*



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live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." (Gal. ii. 20.) This was Paul's Christian and religious experience, and the happiness of his new-born soul was such that he was not ashamed to confess it wherever he went. Ashamed! Why should he be ashamed? Shame is connected with sin, not with holiness. Thus it is that men who live in sin love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil: "For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God." (John iii. 20, 21.) Herein "is wisdom justified of her children," and "by their fruits" they are known by all around them. Religious consistency is the impress they bear, and by their "works" is their "faith made perfect." Christ is their pattern, and in His footsteps they tread day by day. Their life is one continued course of obedience, and the devotedness of their attachment is expressed in the

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language of the Psalmist: "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee." (Ps. lxxiii. 25.)

In order, however, to keep this life healthy and vigorous, we must carefully and constantly guard against the mischievous tendencies to evil by which we are surrounded. The life we thus live is *in the flesh*,—in a frail and fleshly body, requiring to be kept under and brought into subjection to the government of Christ. The carnal mind which lusteth to envy will try to hinder this growth, and keep us, if possible, in a state of dwarfish feebleness. You remember, perhaps, how Paul mourned over this state in the Hebrew Christians of his own day. "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the Oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason

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of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." (Heb. v. 12—14.)

"*To discern both good and evil.*"—Let us linger a while here. "Good and evil" are the two objects set before us; to avoid the one and choose the other is the point I want you specially to consider. I am the more anxious for you to do this because of the saddening instances of failure in the Divine life which I have known through its non-observance. The dangers in our pathway are many, and they are not unfrequently set so as to beguile our unsuspecting minds. What are sometimes called the "customs of life," or the "habits of society," have in themselves a subtle enmity to all that is spiritual and heavenly. Don't imagine that I intend by this remark to suggest, or even to insinuate, that you should so alter your demeanour as to make yourselves distinctive and eccentric, or that you should separate yourselves from worldly persons as such. No! I leave that to popery and its advocates. Christ's followers have no need whatever to assume such a course of conduct as that. Their duties require them to be *in*

*the world*, and to take their proper part in conducting the business thereof. How else is the simile given by our blessed Saviour in the parable of the leaven to be carried out, and its design accomplished? Or the light which we are to let shine before men, that they may see our good works, and glorify our Father which is in heaven? (Matt. xiii. 33; v. 16.) We have duties to perform as citizens, and of all citizens those whose hearts are inflamed with the love of Christ are the most useful and happy. Their treasure is in heaven, where their heart is also; but their hands are employed upon earth assisting to provide for the wants of its inhabitants. And in thus living they stand on a vantage ground which worldlings cannot reach, for they have "*promise* of the life that now is," as well as "of that which is to come." (1 Tim. iv. 8.) A state of moodiness and gloom is not theirs, for although their pathway is said to be a "*vale of tears*," yet they know that "it cannot be long, and they smooth it with hope, and cheer it with song." And the refrain of their song is,—

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“Not in the tombs we pine to dwell,  
Not in the dark monastic cell  
By vows and grates confined ;  
Freely to all ourselves we give,  
Constrain'd by Jesu's love to live  
The servants of mankind.”

Yet there is need that we should ponder well the path of our feet, so as not to be ensnared therein. There is a line which separates the Church from the world, and that line is distinctly traced in the rules for holy living which are given to us in the word of God. Here our *discernment* is specially needed, so as to prevent our erring from the truth. Having come out from among the ungodly, and separated ourselves from their “habits,” we must be careful not to touch, taste, or handle the unclean thing; but we must keep ourselves pure. “Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.” (James iv. 4.) This, too, must ever be *discerned*, and in order to it we must have our senses exercised to know both the one

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and the other. "Going on to perfection" is the one only safeguard here, growing up from babes to young men, and from young men to fathers in Israel. "I have written unto you, young men," said John, "because ye are *strong*." How came they by this strength? What had given them this fixedness and stability in the ways of piety? Simply because of the abiding of God's word in their heart. "If ye abide in Me," says Christ, "and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." (John xv. 7.) So long as the word of God dwells in us, and we keep His commandments, we shall have no desire either for the world's friendship or the world's pleasures.

Then there are duties of a personal, relative, and social nature, which must be faithfully observed and attended to. *Discernment* is needed in this particular also, lest we fall into the snare of the devil. "To everything there is a season," and it will be helpful to us in our spiritual growth to mark this in that state of life to which it shall please God to call us. Baxter says :

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“Be acquainted with the *season* of every duty, and the *duty* of each season; and take them in their time. And thus one duty will help on another; whereas misplacing them and disordering them, sets them one against another, and takes up your time with distracting difficulties, and loseth you in confusion. As he that taketh the morning hour for prayer, or the fittest vacant hour, shall do it quietly, without the disturbance of his other affairs; when if the season be omitted, you shall scarce at all perform it, or almost as ill as if you did it not at all: so it is in point of conscience, reproof, reading, hearing, meditating, and every duty. A wise and well-skilled Christian should bring his matters into such order, that every ordinary duty should know his place, and all should be as the links of one chain which draw on one another; or as the parts of a clock or other engine, which must be all conjunct, and each right placed. A workman that hath all his tools on a heap or out of place, spends much of the day in which he should be working in looking for his tools; when he that

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knoweth the place of every one, can presently take it, and lose no time. So is it in the right timing of our duties." Unless we adopt and strictly carry out this rule, I fear we shall often have to say—

"Hindrances strew all the way,  
I aim at Thee, yet from Thee stray."

Now there is a two-fold sense, at least, in which a vacillating state of heart will tell injuriously against the interests of vital godliness.

*First*, as it regards our own personal comfort. We shall be ill at ease with ourselves by having light enough to show us what our duties are, and yet not courage enough to prosecute them faithfully as they demand. Here again we want our senses exercised by a constant use of the means which are supplied to us for this purpose. How forcibly this point is set before us by Peter in his second Epistle. "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and



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to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Chap i. 5—7.) Mark the connection here. "Beside this." Beside what? By a penitent trust which we have exercised in Christ through the promises given us, we have obtained the favour and peace of God,—we have escaped the corruption in the world through lust, and now further, we must *add to this beginning of our new life* the guards following, the first and foremost of which is "virtue," or "courage," as the word is sometimes rendered. "Join to your precious faith courage to maintain it under persecution." (*Dr. Macknight.*) Be bold enough to say to all opposers,—

"Tempt as ye will, my soul repels,  
To Christ alone resolved to live."

"Be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." (1 Cor. xv. 58.) Yield not to laxity in the

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course upon which you have entered, but be firm in the maintenance of your Christian principles, and retain your integrity in spite of the world, the flesh, and the devil.

“Courage,” your Captain cries,  
Who all your toil foreknew ;  
“Toil ye shall have ; yet all despise,  
I have o’ercome for you.”  
The world cannot withstand  
Its ancient Conqueror ;  
The world must sink beneath the hand  
Which arms us for the war :  
This is our victory !  
Before our faith they fall ;  
Jesus hath died for you and me ;  
Believe, and conquer all.”

*Secondly,* For Christian professors to vacillate in their conduct will tell injuriously upon the unconverted by whom they are surrounded. How much mischief has been done in this way, and how many have been hindered from coming to a decision for Christ, I sometimes tremble to think of. The very profession of religion sets us before the world with a character which cannot be mistaken, and which we should

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never attempt to disguise. By this profession our conduct becomes of infinite importance,—productive of incalculable good or inconceivable mischief. No plea whatever can be set up in favour of a compromise, nor can any excuse be accepted for failure. “And He said to them all, If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.” (Luke ix. 23.) These are the terms of agreement between Christ and each one of His professors. There is no compulsion,—no craft used by way of inducing us to enter His service; but being fully persuaded of its benefits and of its blessedness, and also of the duty we owe to Him, we voluntarily engage ourselves herein, and that too in the most binding and solemn manner. His service is *perfect freedom*. It is entered with joy and gladness,—with thanksgiving and praise. No sooner is the engagement made than we sing :—

“O happy day that fix’d my choice  
On Thee, my Saviour and my God !  
Well may this glowing heart rejoice,  
And tell its raptures all abroad.

“High Heaven, that heard the solemn vow,  
    *That vow renew'd shall daily hear,*  
Till in life's latest hour I bow,  
    And bless in death a bond so dear.”

This is the genuine expression of a holy life of Christian devotedness. This life you and I profess to live. My dear friends, let us *keep* our engagement with the Saviour, and follow Him *fully*. Let us never, by our hesitant and undecided conduct, bring reproach upon that holy Name: but let us always be pressing “toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” (Philip. iii. 14.)

*Let us pray.*

## No. III.

### THE CLASS-MEETING.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

In my first address I spoke to you about the admirable provision made for the members of our Societies, by which they might derive help and comfort in their pathway through this world to their rest in the skies. I now wish to speak more particularly on this point; and in relation, especially, to our Class-Meeting. It is impossible, I think, for any thoughtful and intelligent person to investigate the system of Methodism without being convinced that it is of God. His Own impress is so indelibly stamped upon it as to make it manifest that it originated with Himself, and not through the caprice of man. In raising up our venerated Founder to take the management of the Societies at the outset, and to conduct them step by step in their onward progress,

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it soon became apparent that God had chosen an instrument fitted in every respect for the work. His purity of motive, his sincerity of heart, his fixedness of purpose, his patient perseverance, together with his indomitable courage, combined to make him just the character that was needed for so important a work. It is worthy of note, therefore, that although the name borne by the Societies at large is *distinctive*, yet it is a distinction necessarily resulting from the circumstances of the case. So that in the use of the name of Wesley as the Founder of the System, we use it not for the purpose of glorying in him, but for the sake of glorifying God in him. Bearing this in mind, we shall be the more prepared to consider the nature of our Class-Meeting, and the incalculable benefit to be derived therefrom.

And in requesting your attention to this part of our economy I must begin with the "Rules." If any of you do not possess them, I hope you will apply to your Leader at your next meeting for a copy, and if he has not one to give you, I hope he will ask

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the Superintendent for a supply. I make this remark here, because I have not unfrequently met with persons who for years have been members of Society without ever possessing them, or knowing what they enjoined. I very well remember how much I was surprised in my early ministry, when, on the occasion of holding a Society-Meeting at which I had read a copy of the Rules, several of the older and more intelligent of the members came to me and enquired how they could obtain copies for themselves, willing to pay any amount of cost if they could but be supplied with them.

“In the latter end of the year 1739,” this is the first paragraph, “eight or ten persons came to me in London, who appeared to be deeply convinced of sin, and earnestly groaning for redemption. They desired (as did two or three more the next day) that I would spend some time with them in prayer, and advise them how to flee from the wrath to come, which they saw continually hanging over their heads. That we might have more time for this great work, I appointed a day when they

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might all come together; which, from thenceforward, they did every week, viz., on Thursday, in the evening. To these, and as many more as desired to join with them (for their number increased daily), I gave those advices from time to time which I judged most needful for them; and we always concluded our meeting with prayer suited to their several necessities."

Here is the origin of the Methodist Class-Meeting, a means of grace and of spiritual edification, not premeditated by Mr. Wesley, but induced by the Holy Spirit of God. Wesley's own remarks on this mode of meeting together are the following:—"The desire was on their part, not mine. My desire was to live and die in retirement. But I did not see that I could refuse them my help, and be guiltless before God." (Works, Vol. VIII., p. 299.) To make such a means of grace, therefore, the subject of burlesque, must appear to all reasonable people either a misunderstanding on the part of those who do so, or else a perverseness of mind which is painful to contemplate. That it should be made the subject of jesting



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and foolish talking by the worldly and irreligious around us will surprise no seriously disposed person in the least degree. But the flippant and unbecoming manner in which people professing godliness have felt themselves at liberty to assail it may well excite our wonder, and cause regret.

The charge, too, of religious exclusiveness which has sometimes been laid against us because of our steadfast adherence to this part of our polity, is as groundless as it is pitiable and trifling. The Class-Meeting has never been regarded as a monopoly claimed by ourselves, and forbidden to every body else. Indeed we have rejoiced again and again to find a disposition on the part of spiritually-minded persons, both in the Establishment, and among the Dissenters, to meet together for the express purpose of religious intercourse and Christian fellowship. And we have every reason to believe that if some leading spirit could but have taken up the matter, and organized it into a system, incorporating it into their own church arrangements, the members—especially those of whom we now speak—would have

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welcomed it as an inestimable benefit. No ! Exclusiveness as applied to Methodism, *in any sense*, is a strange perversion of truth ! From the very outset of its existence it has stood forth among the tribes of Israel free from all prejudice, unfettered by all conventionalisms, as breathing the purest charity, and extending the right hand of fellowship to all the rest. In the maintenance of this we are bold to challenge a single instance to the contrary, as sanctioned and encouraged by any part of the authority by which the body is governed. Its unvarying and imperishable motto has ever been, and is still the same,—“ The friends of all, the enemies of none.” Or the same thought in Scripture phrase—“ Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.” (Ephes. vi. 24.)

“ Still,” we are told, “ say what you will about the expansiveness and catholicity of Methodism, there is something in it that is peculiar and unlike the other branches of the Christian Church, and the Class-Meeting is one of the most prominent features therein.” Unquestionably there is. But what-

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ever peculiarity it possesses *in this respect*, it cometh from above,—it is not of man, but of God. And with this conviction in our mind we are driven to reiterate the language of our Founder, and ask how we can “be guiltless before God” if we refuse the help required in its maintenance? The Class-Meeting is an essential and vital part of the Methodist constitution; and for us to abandon or suspend it, or even allow it to become obsolete, would be a betrayal of trust, and must in the very nature of things put us outside the pale of that enclosure within which we were received when we became members. I am very much afraid there is a danger of becoming morbid in our views, and of allowing our moral sensibilities to become obtuse in this matter through listening too much to the jargon which not unfrequently dings our ears in relation thereto. Our safety as well as our happiness, I cannot but think, lies “in walking by the same rule, and in minding the same thing.” The most competent persons to judge in this matter, undoubtedly, are those who have faithfully attended this

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means of grace, and their uniform testimony is borne to the fact of their inestimable benefit, and their rich enjoyment of them.

Moreover, the Biography of the Body speaks volumes, and is trumpet-tongued on this subject. In fact, it is a matter of doubt in my own mind whether we should ever have found ourselves in possession of so rich a treasure as our Biography is, had it not been for this priceless boon. How often have we read therein of the penitent sinner, groaning beneath his load of guilt and condemnation, finding peace with God at the Class-Meeting! How often have we read of the young disciple being strengthened and encouraged in the ways of the Lord in the Class-Meeting! And again and again have we read of older ones being stimulated to give diligence to make their calling and election sure in the same circle of Christian fellowship! The quiet retreat from the noisy world, and from the exciting scenes which surround us therein, is, surely, a privilege not to be despised, nor yet to be thought lightly of. The deep, rich, and joyous experience which is expressed there

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from time to time, together with the comingling of hopes and fears, of joys and sorrows,—of bringing heart to heart, and blending the whole into one common bond of a felt brotherhood, is a fine illustration of the exhortation to “Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.” (Gal. vi. 2.) And O, how often have those kindlings of love prompted the spiritual song whose notes have vibrated from lip to lip until the whole circle has been wrapt in a flame, exclaiming with one simultaneous utterance—

“And if our fellowship below  
In Jesus be so sweet,  
What heights of rapture shall we know,  
When round His throne we meet!”

Such landmarks in the journey of life are calculated still to call forth the expression—  
“Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?” (Luke xxiv. 32.) I don’t know whether any of you have ever heard the remark of the late Rev. William Jay on this passage. It is well

worthy of remembrance in connection with Christian fellowship :—" Here are *two persons* spoken of, but only *one heart*." Yes. My dear friends, the persons may be many, but the heart is one. Herein it is that we have

" One heart, one hope, one mind, one voice,"

and prove that—

" 'Tis heaven on earth begun."

A community of hearts is the best kind of community we can possibly know. So Paul evidently felt when he wrote to the Colossians urging " that their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ." (Coloss. ii. 2.)

Let me implore you, then, as you value your growth in grace,—your advancement in the spiritual life, not to neglect your Class-Meeting. Keep a fixed determination to be always present unless prevented by uncontrollable circumstances. Do not let

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little things hinder you, but make them give way to the requirements and necessities of your immortal souls. It is greatly to be feared that many who were once members with us, and who earnestly followed the Saviour, have relapsed into a state of worldliness and sin through a loose and irregular attendance at the Class-Meeting. Do not seek to become mere *honorary* members, attending two or three times in the quarter for the sake of securing your ticket, and paying your contribution: such membership is, at best, but a cold and frigid thing, and altogether different from the feeling which originated and established this kind of fellowship. Temptations to do so will be presented to you, I have no doubt, and even to stay away altogether; but to yield to temptation cannot be right. Therefore resist and overcome it. Let not the Enemy gain advantage over you, for if he succeed in one instance he will be sure to try again. And have you not already proved that, by breaking through the snare that has been laid for you, and following the path of duty, you have reaped the benefit of so

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doing? I have not unfrequently met with cases of this kind, and the parties have expressed their gratitude to God for His gracious assistance in enabling them to do so. Moreover, you will be the more prepared for his further attacks by the strength you thus derive from the encounter.

“Leave no unguarded place,  
No weakness of the soul ;  
Take every virtue, every grace,  
And fortify the whole :  
Indissolubly join'd,  
To battle all proceed ;  
But arm yourselves with all the mind  
That was in Christ, your Head.”

Another remark I want to make in connection herewith. If you find a member of the class timid and hesitant, set off a little earlier than usual and call for him, telling him that you have come for the purpose of accompanying him to the meeting. This kind of brotherly attention and care will most likely stimulate him to diligence, while at the same time it will promote your mutual interest and comfort. A tender feeling cherished and manifested among



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the members generally, and especially among those in the same class, is sure to be productive of much good, and will unite them more closely to each other, and more closely to Christ. Some of my own fondest and most cherished recollections partake of this character, and I owe more than I can ever express to this kind of sympathy and care. How much real and lasting good you may do by this means it is impossible to say. But of one thing we are quite certain—"He that watereth shall be watered also himself." Thus—

"Sweetly may we all agree,  
Touch'd with softest sympathy ;  
Kindly for each other care,  
Every member feel its share.  
Wounded by the grief of one,  
Now let all the members groan ;  
Honoured if one member is,  
All partake the common bliss."

*Let us pray.*

## No. IV.

### THE OTHER MEANS OF GRACE.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

At our last Meeting I purposely devoted the whole time to the one subject of membership in the Society. I was induced the more strongly to do this from a firm belief that we prosper more, both in our own souls and in the Connexion at large, by a strict attention to our meeting in class, *which is the sole test thereof*. I could supply instances in abundance which have come under my own notice in confirmation of this belief; and as prosperity is the thing we so much desire, nothing, surely, can be successfully set up as a plea against it. One anxiety which, as a Pastor in this Connexion, I have constantly pressing upon me is, the danger of our forgetting the original design which God had in making us a people. Our great business is to save souls.

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I say *our* great business, lest it should be thought that the work belonged to the Ministers only. It is their work undoubtedly, but is it not yours also? Are we not labourers *together* in this hallowed and blessed service? And all attempts to excuse ourselves therefrom will be evidence sufficient to show that we are not so fully alive to this great subject as we ought to be. It will be far easier, and much more to our comfort and safety, if, instead of trying to find excuse for neglect of duty, we set about the performance of it in the fear of God.

“ But you would not have us neglect our business, and the duties which we owe to our families in providing for them, would you ? ” No, I would not indeed. I should be sorry to have any such persons belonging to the Society, seeing that this would be a flagrant violation of God’s own requirement. At this point I should like to linger a while for the sake of considering fairly and fully the interests and claims of both these objects. The idle fat monk in his cell may give himself credit for never-ceasing devo-

tion, but he is, besides being a useless member of the community, a reproach to the very name of religion. Yet when it is urged that business and family claims must be attended to, with a view to excuse ourselves from the claims of Christ and His cause, then I am bound to say in all candour that there is a grievous mistake in that direction also. The rule—*the only safe rule*—is happily laid down for us in holy Scripture: “Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord.” (Rom. xii. 11.) You can never improve upon this; and it will be wise in you never to attempt it. No! It is not encroachment upon the hours of business for which I plead when I urge attendance at the regular and ordinary means of grace. Let us look at the matter, now, calmly and with a single eye to the glory of God, for to Him we shall have to give account.

Considering, then, the eternal interests of the soul,—the envious and determined opposition we have from our adversary the devil, who uses every possible means to destroy us,—the uncertainty of our continu-

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ance here, and the necessity there is of our being always ready, seeing we know not what an hour will bring forth,—we surely cannot but be impressed with the importance of embracing every opportunity which is offered us in order to secure its safety and blessedness. Considering, further, that time is a talent entrusted to us by God, and must be accounted for to Him, we may well be anxious about the use we make of it. Moreover, the gain resulting to ourselves from its improvement in His service is such as will abide when all other gain is gone. In every sense, therefore, and from every standpoint whence you can take a rational survey of the whole matter, it will appear to you the foolishness of folly to waste a single hour that might be used for Him.

I asked that we might look at it *calmly*, for in the constant whirl which is going on around us the danger of not giving it due consideration is very great,—greater possibly than many of us think. In such a frame we may profitably borrow the language of Dr. Young in his “Night Thoughts,” and prove for ourselves that—

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“’Tis greatly wise to talk with our past hours ;  
And ask them, what report they bore to heaven ;  
And how they might have borne more welcome  
news.

Their answers form what men experience call ;  
If wisdom’s friend, her best ; if not, worst foe.”

True, my dear friends, hours of business have their claim upon our attention,—a legitimate and just claim which cannot be disputed. So also, in their own way, have the hours of recreation and pleasure,—intelligent and rational pleasure. But it is impossible for us to make a right use of *time*, however diligent we may be in fulfilling these claims, without, at the same time, acknowledging the claims made upon us by the hours of worship. This, you say, you do not dispute, as your attendance at the house of God testifies. Yes, but this is not the point I am just now aiming at. To how many such hours is the testimony borne? Is it to the morning or the evening hour of public worship on the Lord’s Day, or is it to both? Suppose it to be the latter. What then? Do you really and seriously think that twice at the sanctuary on the Sabbath

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is a fair and proportionate amount of the time given you to devote to the service of Christ? "But there are other duties," you say, "to be attended to on the Sabbath, which could not be neglected without doing a wrong to our families." I am much pleased to hear you say this, and am delighted to find that you have so congenial an employment in your own family circle on the Sabbath day. You do not refer, I know, to the duty of family worship morning and evening, but to the wholesome training of your children and domestics in the fear of the Lord. I wish we had more of this kind of service in our families generally; then I cannot but think we should have more—many more—of our young people early converted to God, and become useful members of our Church.\* It has never

\* "I believe that, as a general rule, our people do not pay the attention they ought to the religious instruction of their children. I believe that if parents would on the Sunday afternoon, or some other portion of the Sabbath, catechise their children, it would be a great element of stability and coherence."—*Rev. Wm. Arthur, M.A., in the Methodist Conference.*

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been my wont to complain of non-attendance at public worship more than twice a day, for one reason among others, that there is not the time for those who do so to catechise and instruct their families as they ought to do. I never could approve of religious dissipation more than of any other kind of dissipation, and have always pleaded for temperance and moderation in all things; and if you diligently perform the service referred to in your families, you are doing far better, and are accomplishing a much greater amount of good, than you could by neglecting it for an extra attendance at public worship. Upon all, therefore, who have families I would urge this by all means. Begin betimes; you cannot set about it too soon; and let them feel that it is a *religious service*, not a mere conversation, however good in itself that may be. Let them *feel* that you seek their good,—even the salvation of their souls. Such “hours” will bear the most encouraging “report to heaven,” and will be looked back to in the future as among the happiest of your life.



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Let me advise you to take for the vigorous and faithful performance of this service the bible, the catechisms, and the hymn book. These will assist you more than any other books I know. The bible takes first rank of course, and is the basis of all sound and safe teaching. You need not fear to begin too early with your lessons therefrom, for they are the simplest and most instructive of any you will find. I have never yet been able to sympathize with the views held by some Christian people,—that you should not attempt to teach God's holy word to children too soon. The narratives of the bible are unrivalled in their simplicity and beauty, and are, therefore, well calculated to make impressions even upon childhood which shall not be forgotten. Where can you find anything to match the story of Moses, or Samuel, or especially of the Saviour Himself? And to let the most impressible period of life pass by in neglect of the instruction which they contain would be a cause of the deepest regret. Beginning early you will be enabled, as their minds expand and their capacities enlarge, to lead

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them onwards in search of the further and richer treasures which are to be found therein.

The catechisms will prove to be invaluable in assisting you to fix those great truths in their minds. The first and second are especially adapted to early childhood, and are so arranged as to give you every facility in the proper performance of your work. By this means you will create and foster in the minds of your children a reverence for God, and a love to His sacred word which, alas! is too frequently lacking in the families of some professedly religious people. You will also imbue their minds with a healthy tone of feeling, the value of which you cannot possibly estimate, and which will be gratefully remembered when you yourselves have passed away. The masterly manner in which the theology of the bible is taught in these manuals is such as to make one easily acquainted with its all-important verities. No irksomeness is felt either in teaching or learning them, and the time of the next lesson is looked forward to with the utmost pleasure. The opening and

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expanding powers of the child are duly anticipated and fully met, and a mutual enjoyment is the happy result. The ties of even natural affection become strengthened hereby, and the reflection in your own mind that you are caring for the soul as well as for the body will enhance your enjoyment a thousand-fold.

The hymn-book, too, will greatly assist you in this kind of service. I do not mean simply the singing of a hymn at the beginning and the close, but by making it a part of the instruction which you give to your children. In its genuine poetry, its thorough practical divinity, and its rich religious experience, it stands altogether unrivalled. The abiding freshness which the hymns possess, and the vigorous tone of feeling which they always inspire, bear testimony to their value in this respect. The pathos with which I have sometimes heard them quoted in the sick chamber, as well as in the Class-Meetings, has led me again and again to inquire what there can be in them to produce such an effect, and I have been driven to the conclusion that it is the

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combined excellency to which I have referred.

Then beside this you have the purity and strength of the English tongue, the absence of hard and difficult words, together with an elegance of diction that is sure to attract every diligent and attentive reader. All this is of great importance in forming ideas in the youthful mind and influencing the heart with feelings of a highly spiritual nature. It was my privilege when setting out in public life to be entertained on one occasion at the house of a wealthy Methodist, and I have never forgotten the manner in which the Sabbath was kept in that family. The younger branches had grown up beyond the period when the catechisms would be formally taught, but the use which was made of the bible and the hymn-book gave me the impression that they had been made a great blessing to them all. At that time the circle was unbroken, but the father and mother with several of their children are now gone home to God, and the rest are on their way to rejoin them in the skies. O what a heightening of our bliss it will be

to meet our families—no member lost, but unbroken families—around the throne of God in that eternal house above! Then shall we re-count—with a joy we cannot even imagine now—the happy hours we have spent in our family circles, with our dear children gathered around us, talking about Jesus and the mansions He had gone to prepare for us. O do let me impress upon you,—you especially who have families,—the necessity of thus training them for the Lord and for His blessed service. Do not let one opportunity slip, for you have not one to spare. Teach these things diligently, talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. Bind them for a sign upon your hands, and let them be as frontlets between your eyes. Write them upon the posts of your houses, and on your gates. Let it be the habit,—the fixed purpose of your life. And let it be done always to the honour and the glory of God.

And now that our time is nearly gone, I will defer, till our next meeting, the

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remarks it was my intention to make on the subject with which we set out,—namely, “The other means of grace.” Meanwhile I should like us all to carry home with us the suggestions which have been made this evening, determining, by the assistance of Divine grace, to put them into practice. By this means we shall strengthen the bulwarks of Zion, our children will rise up and call us blessed, and in all probability they themselves will tell it to the generation following, adding,—“This God is our God for ever and ever: He will be our guide even unto death.” (Ps. xlviii. 13, 14.)

*Let us pray.*

No. V.

THE OTHER MEANS OF GRACE.

*(Continued.)*

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

The subject of our attendance at the other means of grace besides the Class-Meeting is the one I wish to continue this evening. The design of God in making us a people has already been referred to, and how much of His great purpose has been accomplished thereby, is a matter we shall never know till we review the whole in the paradise above. The benefits resulting to this nation in particular, and to the world in general, are such as can never be computed by us while here. And when I speak thus I do not refer to one class of benefits merely, but to every class that can be of service to our race. The contingencies of God's Providence we hold to be as much in force to-day as they were when they were first

spoken. If thou wilt obey, blessing; if not, cursing. A holy people is needed in order to national preservation. If anyone should attempt to dispute this point, the whole of the world's history would confront him therein. "An holy people unto the Lord," is the condition of being made "high above all nations which He hath made, in praise, and in name, and in honour." (Deut. xxvi. 19.) What the state of our own nation was when it pleased God to thrust John Wesley out into its highways and hedges, no one will stay to question. And what was the life motto of that devoted and venerable man? What? "Scriptural Holiness." To "spread Scriptural holiness over the land." How then can we reckon ourselves worthy successors of such a man, unless we inherit his spirit and copy his example? The need of doing this is painfully apparent, for iniquity, alas! still abounds in the midst of us.

Now the seat of holiness is the heart, and its maintenance and growth can only be promoted by receiving grace from Him who implanted it there. If then the means by



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which this grace is communicated unto us be neglected, what can we expect but its decay and destruction? Bear with me, I entreat you, if I venture to urge a caution against being ensnared in the net of mere formalism, for of all formalism in the world I cannot but think Methodist formalism is the worst. The present abnormal state of general society is not at all favourable to the regular attendance at public worship on the week-day evenings, I know; but must we give way to that, or make that give way to us? Which, now, in your conscience is right? Which would you rather be answerable for in the judgment? Only yield in this instance, and soon you will be found yielding in another, and another, until you have yielded altogether. You may continue to *respect* the cause, and even to give it your support as liberally as you did before; but that can never suffice for the loss of the life of grace in your soul.

I spoke in my last address on the duties and pleasures of service in the home circle, and am glad I was diverted into that track instead of pursuing the regular path I had

fixed to walk in. But many of you have neither the gifts nor the opportunities of conducting such services. Yet you can command your children and your household after you, in the fear and worship of the Lord your God. If there is one thing which you would dread when you come to lie on the bed of death, I apprehend it would be to reflect upon an irregular and a pernicious example set before your children. In disciplining yourselves, then, in the pathway of religious duty, you will confirm by your example what you teach by precept. You can pray with your families, and take them with you to the house of God. And I would say, Don't let the two be severed from each other. I could tell of strange remarks made by the children of religious people, who, when they have grown up to manhood, and have reviewed their history, have expressed their regret at its course; but I will not do so. My point just now is to press upon you the importance of regular attendance at the week-night services, *and of taking your children with you.* Let them feel that public worship is not confined to the Sabbath-day,

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but that some portion of the other six should be sacredly set apart for the same purpose.

I have often felt surprised that parents should excuse their children from attendance at the week-night service, and suffer them to be in the streets, mixing with companions of a doubtful and even dangerous reputation, when they themselves are tolerably regular in the house of God! Surely conscience must often suggest that such a laxity of parental discipline is not likely to be favourably remembered by children as they advance in life and seriously reflect upon the dangers they have passed through.

And what valid reason can possibly be urged against the family pew being occupied on the week-night as well as on the Sabbath?

“The habits of society,” I am told, “are so altered in this day from what they formerly were, that it is all but impossible to attend the week-night services.” I hope that all who *seriously* urge this plea have carefully pondered the subject, so as to be prepared with a satisfactory account at last. I have already observed that time is a talent

entrusted to us by God, and for the use of which we are held responsible to Him alone. If, therefore, the habits of society, and those who form and establish them, have a claim to our attention, let that claim be thoughtfully and fully considered. And if, after weighing all the interests at stake, giving a candid and impartial consideration to each separately, and to the whole in the aggregate, we find the claim to be a just one, then let the decision be given accordingly. If, however, we can find time for amusement, for secular gatherings, and for "evening entertainments," and cannot find any for public worship, then I am bound to say there must be a grievous mistake somewhere. And I should be afraid, were I to be silent on this matter, and not to raise my voice against such a course, that I should not stand guiltless before God. "If ye seek Me, let these go their way." I dread the thought of self-deception in so vital and momentous a matter, and am most anxious on your account lest you should fall thereinto. O do look at it again. Reconsider the "claims" — the conflicting claims — which are set

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before you, and ask God the Holy Ghost to guide you to a safe conclusion.

“What, could ye not watch with Me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.” The tempter is always ready to attack us, and is well versed in timing his temptations to our different states and circumstances. Sometimes it suits him to tempt us to lie, or steal, or to defraud. At others, the temptation to niggardliness, and the love of money which is the root of all evil, would be more likely to serve his purpose. Others again are more likely to be successful in drawing us into scenes of luxury, and needless self-indulgence. And with so untiring an adversary, who goeth about seeking whom he may devour, what counsel could be of greater service than that which I have quoted from the Saviour’s own lips? *One* hour in the day sacredly set apart from the hours of business to be spent with God would be of great benefit to those who are in the din and strife of the world. Many reasons might be urged in support of this. If we get wealth, the “power” to do so cometh

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from Him. If health is continued to us day by day, so as to enable us to follow our avocations, and fulfil the duties of life, it also is His gift. If we are preserved from accident, disease, or death, we owe it to Him in whom "we live, and move, and have our being." So that on every hand the obligation is manifest, and to acknowledge it is not only our wisdom, but our safety too. Besides, the enervating influence which a constant and uninterrupted tumult in secular concerns exerts upon the spirit, has a downward tendency, and requires to be counteracted by the "power from on high." Without this no one can be surprised at our becoming alienated from the life of God in the soul. In such a state of heart even the bright and joyous return of the holy Sabbath is not so welcome to us as it would otherwise be. A spiritual languor creeps into the soul, prompting us to seek an excuse for absenting ourselves from attending its call to even the ordinary and acknowledged duties which devolve upon us.

Now, is it not to this state of heart that we trace much of the apathy which exists

amongst us, and over which we mourn so bitterly? The vigour and earnestness which are required to push forward the cause of our Redeemer against its triple foe, are sadly lacking, and many who should come "up to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty," are, alas! trying to find excuses for being at ease in Zion. And when once excuses are tolerated they will be sure to multiply upon us until the performance of the duties which Christ and His Church claim at our hands becomes, not only difficult, but burdensome. "You see I have so much to do in my own business during the week that I have not time to attend to these things," is the too familiar answer given to the earnest entreaties of those who seek for brotherly counsel and help in carrying on the work of the Lord.

Yes, dear friends, I am much afraid that this is too true. And not only so, but I am afraid you have too much to do in your business to allow you to keep up that intercourse with God which your souls so much need. The reckoning up of results of

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labour, and skill, and energy in your worldly calling, may stand fairly, and may redound greatly to your credit as thorough business men; but my anxiety on your behalf is as to how your reckoning will appear in that other book which will be opened in the day when we shall "all appear at the judgment seat of Christ," and give an account of the deeds done in the body. Let me put it to you then,—and I do it with all possible affection,—is there not a danger, not only of seeking but also of *having* your portion in this life? It never can be a safe course to seek *first* the world, and then the Saviour,—to set its claims first, and His afterwards. This is directly to reverse His own order, and cannot, therefore, succeed. Only let His own course be pursued,—take it as coming fresh from Himself to you, rigorously adopt, and persistently carry it out, and you may rely upon it that the reckoning will be greatly to your advantage, both for "the life that now is, and also for that which is to come." "Godliness with contentment is great gain," but gain without godliness—however great



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it may be—will prove the most terrible loss that can possibly befall you.

I need hardly remind you that the very constitution of our Connexion is such as to require attention to our routine of week-night services. Where were they ever heard of till John Wesley went through the land advocating and establishing them? Nor do I believe we should have gained the position we hold in the country this day had they not been faithfully observed. It has cost no small amount of self-denial, and hard, unremitting toil to work it up to that position, and I never think of either the one or the other without feeling a throb of holy joy in my heart that the great Master ever raised up and sent forth such noble workers into His vineyard. I revere their memory, and have read their lives over and over again if haply I might catch but a spark of the fire which inflamed their breast, and which, like the altar of old, had it ever burning thereon. I don't speak thus of the ministers merely, but of the lay members also. In the Kingswood Circuit, the one with which I was more intimately acquainted before being

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separated to the work of the ministry, it was a general practice for the Leaders and others to go through the whole neighbourhood, holding week-night services in rooms and cottages, wherever an opening could be found. And the good resulting from those services—the souls converted to God, and the numbers who were blessed to their edification—will only be known in that day when the Lord shall make up His jewels. O, if we could but get our people—our talented and gifted people—to take up this matter with heart and soul, adopting and carrying out the Cornish motto, “*One and all!*” what a mighty change would soon come over the whole Connexion! Do, then, I implore you, be up and doing. The day is far spent with many of you, and the night is at hand.

I had almost said you hardly know, and yet you can easily imagine, how much you hold up the hands of your ministers by your hearty co-operation in their great work. Their spirits are cheered, and their hearts rejoice when “helpers” of this kind rally round them, and accompany them in their

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onward march against the kingdom of darkness. That this kingdom must fall is certain, but whether the honour and glory of hastening it shall be ours is a matter to be decided by ourselves. The call comes from the Master's lips to go,—to *go to-day* and work in His vineyard. O, may we be wise to know our duty, — *and do it!* O, that to-night each one of us may be resolved to say :—

“ A faithful witness of Thy grace,  
Well may I fill the' allotted space,  
And answer all Thy great design ;  
Walk in the works by Thee prepared ;  
And find annex'd the vast reward,  
The crown of righteousness divine.”

*Let us pray.*

## No. VI.

### ADJUNCTS.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

I have several other things to say in connection with the subject which has occupied our attention at our last two meetings. The *conditions* of membership are well understood by you all, as I presume you have pondered the "Rules" of the Society, and have fully informed yourselves on this subject. "There is one only condition previously required of those who desire admission into these Societies, viz., a desire to flee from the wrath to come, and to be saved from their sins." This is the condition of *admission*. Then follow the conditions of *continuance*, which, after giving a detailed account of both negative and positive duties, thus bring us to the sequel:—

"It is expected of all who desire to continue in these Societies, that they shoul

continue to evidence their desire of salvation. *Thirdly.* By attending upon all the ordinances of God: such are the public worship of God; the ministry of the word, either read or expounded; the Supper of the Lord; family and private prayer; searching the Scriptures; and fasting or abstinence. These are the general Rules of our Societies; all which we are taught of God to observe, even in His written word,—the only rule, and the sufficient rule, both of our faith and practice. And all these we know His Spirit writes on every truly awakened heart. If there be any among us who observe them not, who habitually break any of them, let it be made known unto them who watch over that soul, as they that must give an account. We will admonish him of the error of his ways: we will bear with him for a season. But then, if he repent not, he hath no more place among us. We have delivered our own souls.” Here you perceive are pastoral relationship, pastoral oversight, and pastoral responsibility definitely set before us, and in perfect harmony with the holy Scriptures. So that the rash

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and inconsiderate remarks which are sometimes made about our adhering more to what Mr. Wesley says, than to the directions of the bible, are at once exploded. Neither in doctrine nor in discipline do we ever set forth our Founder as opposed to the Scriptures, but rather as giving a full, clear, and distinct exposition of them.

Now it will serve very much to keep us right in the enjoyment of our membership if we have a fixed rule by which to regulate our conduct. By this I mean that certain times be set apart and kept for the several kinds of engagements and duties which we have to perform. I can easily imagine that you will say this is not practicable in all cases, seeing that families differ so widely in their modes of action, the nature of their occupation, and other matters which cannot be minutely enumerated. True, but I am not now speaking of one hard and fast line to be laid down as applicable to all, but that each individual should have an established order for himself, and that each household should have the same. This can be easily done without any inconvenience either to the

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one or the other. Thus the hour that is *set apart* for worship, whether private or public, will be regarded as *sacred*, and not to be encroached upon or interfered with by others. Regarded in this light, the duties they summon us to perform will become our delight, their performance will be regularly looked for, and the gain to ourselves will be great.

By the same kind of attention, too, there will be a becoming punctuality which is so much needed in the right and proper discharge of those duties. I am not willing that a single moment *set apart for the Lord* should be taken for any other purpose whatever. While we render *in full* the time allotted to business, to recreation, and every other claim of an earthly nature, so by the same process of reasoning, and the same principle of action, we certainly ought not to allow any diminution of the *full amount* of time which we profess to devote to the service of Christ. Render to all their due, or if at any time either claim should be diminished, let it not be the claim of Christ. If this be allowed we must suffer loss, and shall so far hinder our progress in the way

to heaven. Moreover, the *example*, which is set by late attendance at the house of God is very pernicious, more so I fear than many are aware of. "Let all things be done decently and in order," is a precept which applies with all its force to the service and worship of God. I have sometimes wondered whether persons who cause so much disorder by coming into the house of God after the service is begun ever think seriously upon it. Whether the interruption be in the singing, or the prayer, or, in fact, as is sometimes the case, even so late as the reading of the lessons, the discomfort to devout worshippers is a cause of deep regret. Surely a little consideration, a little forethought, and a little pre-arrangement might entirely remedy this evil, which, alas! is so common amongst us. To commence the public worship of God when we have not one-third of the congregation present, is most disheartening to the minister who is conducting it; but the greater sadness arises from the positive loss of spiritual influence on the part of those who occasion it. "I was greatly blessed this morning while the



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opening hymn was being sung," said a pious woman on her way home from the chapel in which she had been worshipping one Lord's-day morning, "which, if I had been late in attendance, I must have lost altogether." Yes, devotional singing, especially such as is realized in the tunes which are set to our incomparable hymns, is full of rich and holy unction, and none who enter into the spirit of such worship can fail to be blessed therein. For your own sake, therefore, as well as for the sake of others, do try to be present and waiting for the opening of the service.

These remarks apply equally to the Class-meeting, the prayer-meeting, the closet, and the family altar, as to the more public worship of God. Let us never forget that God is not mocked. The offering presented to Him must be whole and un mutilated, or He cannot accept it. Whatever the great adversary of our souls can do to imperil our salvation we may be sure will be vigorously done, and if he cannot succeed in preventing our worshipping God altogether, he will use all the influence he possesses in interrupting

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us in its due performance. Excuses, of course, can easily be found, and reasons in abundance will be at hand by which to attempt a justification of our conduct. Yet in a scrutiny of both the one and the other, there would, we doubt not, be found underlying the whole a subtle design to rob us of that spiritual enjoyment we so much need. What we want in passing through this dangerous world is *strength in the inner man*, and we can obtain it only by waiting upon the Lord. The mere routine of duty cannot secure it apart from the desire of the soul which panteth for God. We come to Him for His blessing, and we must be consistent both with His claims and our own admission of them, or we cannot succeed. If, therefore, we would learn the lessons of grace, wisdom, and understanding, we must learn them at the feet of Jesus; and if we would learn them more perfectly it must be by the *patient* waiting for Christ.

There is another thing I want to mention, and that is, the necessity of guarding against a fickleness which I am afraid is growing amongst us, in going from one place of

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 worship to another, instead of fixing upon and settling down to one which we may call our own. On particular and special occasions no one will, of course, wonder at our doing so, but to habituate ourselves thereto will prove most injurious to our spiritual advancement. A craving for what is termed popular preaching does not indicate a healthy state of mind, and you seldom find persons of this class excel either in stability or strength. We may find gratification and pleasure in the practice it is true, but *mere* gratification is not surely the object we have in view when we "go to the house of the Lord." The soul craves for *food*, and requires something solid and substantial; and if this is withheld it becomes lean and sickly. Moreover, the example set by such a practice is not good, tending as it does to religious dissipation and not to religious profit.

As a rule, then, I would urge upon you the importance of being in your own seat in *your own* place of worship, and although the preacher may sometimes be "not quite to your mind," yet if you go in the spirit of

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worship, fulfilling St. Paul's request of the Thessalonians (see 2 Epist., ch. iii. 1, 2), I have no doubt that you will find much more comfort and blessing in the service than you would otherwise do. "We had a poor preacher this morning," said Lady Maxwell on one occasion, "but I received a blessing by looking beyond the servant to the Master," or words to the same effect. I read this in the life of that devoted lady many years ago, and the impression it made upon my mind has never worn away. Our worship to be profitable must be *spiritual*; and if we go to the Lord's house expecting to meet Him there, we shall certainly not be disappointed. If, however, we go in a fretful and complaining spirit, it cannot be wondered at if we return not the better for our attendance, but the worse. Besides, the influence we exert upon those with whom we associate will be very injurious, much more so than we think of at the time. It has pained me again and again to hear parents especially talk so freely in this spirit and temper before their children, never thinking of the mischief such conversation

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is likely to do them. The only time I ever had the privilege of hearing that eminent servant of Christ, the late Rev. F. A. West, I was much struck with this point which he purposely made prominent in his discourse. In the most impressive and powerful manner he cautioned parents, and heads of families in general, against this dangerous habit. Depend upon it we cannot be too circumspect in this matter, and unless we are prepared to reap the harvest we must be careful not to sow the seed. Home influence is very great: let us always be careful to make use of it to the greatest possible advantage.

Again, let the bible as well as the hymn-book be used by you in the public worship of God. This will add to the interest of the service by fixing the different parts of it in your mind, causing you to note them as they pass, so that you may refer to them again both with pleasure and with profit. By this means you will be able to follow the minister in reading the lessons, and also in the references he may make to parallel passages by way of illustrating the subject

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of his discourse. This is much to be preferred to the custom of sharing one bible between several persons, passing it from one to another, causing confusion both to themselves and to others. Many of the preacher's remarks are lost by this means, and, instead of having the thoughts collected and fixed, we become bewildered and perplexed; and in such a frame of mind we cannot hear to profit as we otherwise should.

To members of the choir these remarks are of special importance. I have never been able yet to see the necessity for the incessant rustling of the leaves of the tune-book, and the loud whisperings which are so frequently occurring while the Scriptures are being read. Excuses could be pleaded, no doubt, on behalf of those who do so, but I cannot help thinking it might be avoided. At any rate it is a matter well worthy of consideration in so essential a part of our public worship. Mark the phrase referred to: "The ministry of the word, *either read or expounded.*"

The other points enumerated will be pro-

ductive of much good if faithfully attended to. I will venture to suggest for your consideration a devout exercise which has been of great benefit to those who have performed it,—and that is the *reading* of the “Rules” carefully through once a quarter, or oftener, as opportunity has served for so doing. In connection with “searching the Scriptures, and fasting or abstinence,” it has been rendered a great blessing in strengthening their faith, confirming their hope, and in building them up in love.

“The Supper of the Lord” is a duty which we should be always ready to perform, not only because of the high privileges connected therewith, but also because it is the command of Him whose name we bear, and Who is our life. Some persons have tried to make the partaking of the Lord’s Supper a test of membership among us, but have not succeeded in doing so. No one will wonder at the failure, seeing that the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper is not a *test* of membership in any particular *section* of the Christian Church, but a *token* rather of membership

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in the Church universal. So we say in the following verses :—

“Come, *all* who truly bear  
The name of Christ your Lord,  
His last mysterious Supper share,  
And keep His kindest word.  
Hereby your faith approve  
In Jesus crucified :  
‘In *memory* of My dying love,  
Do this,’—He said,—and died.

“The *badge* and *token* this,  
The sure confirming seal,  
That He is ours, and we are His,  
The servants of His will ;  
His dear peculiar ones,  
The purchase of His blood ;  
His blood which once for all atones,  
And brings us now to God.

“*Part* of His church below,  
We thus our right maintain ;  
Our living membership we show,  
And in the fold remain,—  
The sheep of Israel’s fold,  
In England’s pastures fed ;  
And fellowship *with all we hold*,  
*Who hold it with our Head.*”

I trust it will be your happiness to fulfil



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these "conditions of continuance" in the Society into which you have been admitted, serving your own generation by the will of God, that when you fall on sleep you may be gathered home to be for ever with the Lord.

"He now is fitting up your home :  
Go on : we'll meet you there."

*Let us pray.*

## No. VII.

### READING.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

“Apply thine heart unto instruction, and thine ears to the words of knowledge.” (Prov. xxiii. 12.) “Also, that the soul be without knowledge, it is not good.” (Prov. xix. 2.) Knowledge is power, and if we would exert an influence upon society at large, we must first ascertain how that object can be most effectually accomplished. To “give attendance to reading” was advice well worthy of an Apostle himself, knowing, as he did, its great importance in the refutation of error, and in the maintenance and diffusion of truth. I do not wish by this remark to insinuate that you ought to read for the sake of controverting the errors which, alas! are so perniciously rampant around us, although it may not be amiss for us to be abreast of the times in this respect,

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so as to be able to hold our ground against the arrogant pretensions which are put forth by designing men. What I am more anxious about just now is the importance of good, useful reading, such as shall not only enlighten and instruct the mind, but which shall, at the same time, strengthen and invigorate the soul.

Ever first and foremost stand the holy Scriptures, which every godly person should daily read and meditate upon. The exhaustless riches which you find there will make you feel that you belong to the truest nobility of God's creation, and will cause you to be recognised as kings and priests unto Him. The tree of knowledge which grows there yields fruit such as is found nowhere else,—

“Sublimar sweets than nature knows  
Invite the longing taste.”

You have not only knowledge, but the “excellency of knowledge,” for the possession of which Paul counted all things but loss. It is a sad evidence of a lack of spiritual appetite when the Book of God is lightly esteemed, or held as being only of

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secondary importance. Pre-eminence is its proper place,—a place which it claims by reason of its heavenly origin and its heavenly tendency. It came from God, and it leads to God by the bright shining of its own light, which shines more and more till we reach the perfect day.

Yet there are other books which will be of great service to us in connection therewith. Biography, History, Literature, and Science, as well as subjects of general interest in the events of life which are constantly occurring around us. In order, however, to profit by our reading, there must be *method* observed, or we shall not gain much thereby. The design of reading should be to increase in knowledge, and the powers of the mind should be kept in healthy exercise in order to secure this object. It is not enough, therefore, simply to *read*; we may do this with the utmost avidity, and yet be but little, if any, wiser for so doing. It is not enough that the mind be vigorous; it needs to be robust and settled also. Our faculties may be large and expanding, or they may be more limited in their range; still the one

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uniform aim should be to turn all our reading to good account.

Among the subjects enumerated above, there is that of *science*; and I have named it with a view, not to press its study unduly upon your attention, but for the sake of advising any among the younger branches of our families not to set it defiantly aside, nor yet to treat it in a loose and indifferent manner. If you read scientific works at all, read them *thoroughly* and to purpose. I will tell you how a youth who was educated at one of our schools made use of his reading in this department, as illustrating what I mean. Having grown up to manhood, and in following the openings of what appeared to be his providential lot in life, he embarked for a distant country with this end in view. One day, as a group of first-class passengers sat together on board the vessel, this young man heard the Truth of God assailed by another young man, who made large pretensions to scientific discoveries. Perhaps I had better give the account in his own words:—"I was sitting, along with other passengers, on the poop-deck, and on my right hand was a B.A.

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who boldly asserted that the scientific discoveries of the last twelve or thirteen years had proved that the Bible was a myth. Of course I accepted the challenge for my Master. The B.A. was evidently taken aback, while I anticipated and refuted every scientific objection (so called), and in less than half an hour he found it convenient to retire. I never *seek* a disputation of that kind, yet I can safely say that I am not afraid of science."

True, nor need any one else be ; only we must read carefully and understandingly, and not be mere *smatterers*. It has been said that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing. How far this is correct is not a point I intend to discuss here ; yet the vain boasting of the person in question proved to his humiliation, and we hope to his regret also, that in his own case the parade he made of his learning was not at all to his credit. They were both young men, who had been favoured with a good education ; but the *use* that each made of his advantages was soon made manifest in the disputation I have mentioned. And so with every other subject. Whatever you take in hand, aim at

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mastering it. Better read fewer books with an understanding of their contents, than a larger number with only a superficial acquaintance therewith. Get the subject you read about clearly defined in your own mind, and its leading features well understood ; this will give you confidence in conversing upon it, and raise you above the suspicion of being only a pretender to knowledge.

It is not, however, to be supposed that the subjects I have named and others of a kindred character will constitute the whole of your course of reading. The Magazine literature of the day will be sure to engage your attention to a greater or less degree, and in this also you will find it of great importance to make a good selection. It is a point which cannot for a moment be questioned that much of the magazine and periodical reading now in vogue is most hurtful and dangerous in its tendency, vitiating the mind and creating desires directly opposite to seriousness and devotion. I was struck some time ago while reading the Editor's remarks in an ably conducted metropolitan journal, in his review

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of books of this class grouped together according to their order. They were to this effect:—After giving their names he went on to say, “They contain a large amount of entertaining and instructive matter, more or less tinged with religious feelings and ideas.” Right glad was I to find that none of the issues from our Book-Room were enumerated in the list, and I greatly rejoice that while in “doctrine” we still show “uncorruptness” amidst the wide-spread and soul-destroying errors around us, we can make our boast also of the maintenance of a healthy, vigorous, and *spiritual* literature. To remove the ancient landmarks in this respect, and break down the barriers which have always been considered sacred by the most pious of our people, so as to inundate the pastures of Zion with a kind of reading whose avowed tendency is but to *amuse* and gratify the masses, is a work that belongs not to the Methodist Connexion; and I devoutly tender my hearty thanks to those who manage our book affairs, that they have steadily and persistently withstood the enticements and



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allurements to follow in the wake of those who do. Deeply indeed will it be regretted if the day shall ever come when a respectable Review shall be able honestly to say of any of *our* periodicals that they are only “more or less *tinged* with religious feelings and ideas.”

It has been said, I know, and with emphasis too, that the mind has powers and capacities craving for aliment, and that we must do our part towards meeting the demand, or others will do it instead. True, I am aware of the large demand in this respect, and am thankful for it; and if I shall not be thought presumptuous I will say with equal emphasis that our part *is* done,—done faithfully and well. I have already spoken to you about the craving for aliment here referred to, in my remarks on the more solid and substantial reading I spoke of in the earlier part of this address, so that I need not repeat them here. The appetite is created undoubtedly, and the point is how best to meet and satisfy it. To feed the mind with frothy and unsubstantial matter is a sure way to debilitate and unfit it for

its high and noble purpose. Do the same thing to the body, and what sort of frame and constitution will you have? And I cannot but fear that much of the sickly sentimentalism of the day is traceable to this very thing. In an age when *religious novels* can find readers in large numbers, we have need to be on our guard, as parents, lest they find access to our homes, and by their vitiating contents alienate the minds of our children from the good and the right way. Just as we would guard against the pestilence or the plague, so should we with equal vigilance guard our homes against such noxious and enervating trash. To this kind of reading we trace, in a great measure at least, the flippant familiarity with pious phrases, and the irreverent comparisons not unfrequently instituted between sacred and secular things, a practice which is ever to be condemned as vulgar and low, as well as impious and offensive.

Observing on one accasion in the house of one of our Leaders who had a family growing up around him, several of the very trashy and light publications of the day, I

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ventured very kindly to suggest the value and importance of our own periodicals, and how serviceable they would be to the children : the reply was quickly given to the effect that they were not at all suited to young people. I have lived to see "the young people" grow up, and have painfully witnessed concerning them what I too much feared would be the result. And who will venture to say that the same cause is not still at work, and producing similar effects to a very alarming extent? It has been my wont during the whole of my ministry to advise as among the first and foremost of books for family reading, those which are issued by our own Book-Room. You are sure there to find solid, vigorous, and healthy food both for mind and heart, and such as is suitable for "the young people too."

It is said again that this is a reading age, and that it is useless to attempt to interrupt the general desire for its indulgence. Now the first point here noted is thankfully admitted, and the second I should like most earnestly to encourage, not even attempting to "interrupt" it. And I am bound to say

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further that Methodism has never been culpable in this matter. This would be an undeserved reflection upon its entire history. Its venerated Founder originated and established an organization for this purpose which has succeeded, perhaps, beyond the most sanguine expectation of everyone who has watched its progress. In this respect as well as in others his works prove that he was far in advance of the times in which he lived. Nor have his sons and successors been a whit behind in desire and effort to perpetuate and extend his own plans in this department of service. But I am asked,—“Would you be so exclusive as to shut us up to our own Periodical reading, and not allow us to become acquainted with what is being done in other departments around us?” To which I answer, “*No! emphatically No!*” Nevertheless I do say that our own, unsurpassed in talent, solidity, and real usefulness, *ought not to be shut out from our families*, while other periodicals are admitted therein. This would be very “*exclusive*” indeed. What I advise is, that we get *good* reading, such as shall both profit and in-

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terest us, and give a healthy tone to the heart as well as to the mind. There is so much that is ephemeral and fanciful issued from the press nowadays, with religious and semi-religious titles so misleading and deceptive, that we cannot be too scrupulous in this matter. We want *thinkers* as well as readers,—persons who can tell us what they have been reading about, when they close the book and lay it aside. Dr. Miller has a good remark on this point which I will take the liberty of quoting to you. It is found in his very elaborate preface to “Nichol’s Series of Standard Divines.” After speaking of the magnitude of their works he goes on to say,—“Shorter books, books calling for little thought; the thoughts of the intellectual giants of former days diluted and watered down to our own taste; these are best adapted to an age of much and rapid reading, but little studying; an age marked by a pernicious taste for light reading, and content to derive too much of its learning and information at second-hand, from periodicals and newspapers. An age, too, in which even the multiplication of

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privileges in the number of sermons preached and of public meetings held, in combination with the cheap publications with which the press teems, tends to diffuse, but not to deepen thought." It is against this "pernicious" taste that I want to guard you, and at the same time advise you to avoid every kind of publication that would feed it. You will be both wiser and better for doing so, while at the same time you will be saved from the snares and follies into which too many, alas! fall by such indulgence.

It has been a marvel to me, I must confess, to hear our own publications decried as being so much more costly than others, and making this a plea for their being not more extensively circulated and read. Even if the statement were correct, their superior value would certainly justify their wide circulation. But I have never yet been able to find out its correctness, nor in fact anything that could lead me to imagine what should have given rise thereto. It is not a great while ago that a very kind friend of my own mentioned a book which had

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been written by one of our ministers, and published by a London house, as being a marvel of cheapness, adding "What a pity it is our Book-Room does not supply the public with such books at the same price!" It led me at once to look into the matter, and so I got the book and examined it thoroughly,—its type, paper, binding, and its general execution, and I found that we had not a single publication (that is, not one that came under my own notice) of the same kind and size published at so high a price. I need not tell you how much my friend was surprised, on examining the matter for himself, at the correctness of my remark. The "pity," therefore, is, not that we do not publish as cheaply as others, but rather that people do not assure themselves of the fact before they venture to make the assertion.

The same remark applies to our Sunday-school publications. I have been grieved again and again to find almost all kinds of publications and school books used in our Sunday-schools *except those of our Conference Office*. But for the fact of the school being taught on Wesleyan premises, and

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having the name of Wesleyan given to it, you would find very little that is Wesleyan about it. And then, forsooth! you not unfrequently hear the complaint uttered—and notably from these very schools—that the Society is so little supplied with members therefrom! It is certainly not to our credit to hear persons who have grown up to manhood and womanhood express their surprise at such and such books being taught them in “Wesleyan Sunday-schools.” Sometimes the rankest Calvinism has been taught without the teacher’s observation, and he has not been aware of it till it has been pointed out to him. *Why* these incongruities and inconsistencies should be allowed to exist amongst us I have never yet been able to ascertain, for no one I have inquired of has been able to give me an intelligent explanation.

Do you ask why I dwell so pointedly and so earnestly on these matters? I will tell you frankly. My wish is that Methodism should take hold of and permeate the masses around us to a much greater extent than it has yet done; and having the means in our



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own hands and at our own disposal, I am anxious that they should be used to their fullest extent. And I am satisfied that if we will but unite in their use, in ourselves, in our families, in the Society, in the Sunday-school,—in our reading, thinking, practice, and our general deportment, we shall assuredly gain the object of our most cherished desires. If I am asked for a justification of my wish, I will tell you with equal frankness,—because “Methodism is Christianity in earnest.”

*Let us pray.*

No. VIII.

THE SABBATH DAY.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

I shall commence my present address by reading the fourth Commandment: "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates; for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it." (Exod. xx. 8—11.)

In the distribution of time, and the provision made for our constantly recurring necessities, the great Creator and Preserver has shown the care He exercises over us, and the interest He takes both in our tem-

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poral and spiritual welfare. How nicely and accurately He has adjusted the matter is but too clearly seen by every considerate individual. The break upon the monotony of labour, and the light and glory of the interval, are at once apparent, and the wisdom of the arrangement is not less conspicuous than the goodness which prompted it. And it is because this most precious boon to man is so sadly abused,—abused I am afraid by some well-intentioned people,—that I wish to occupy the time of one of these “Meetings” in engaging your attention to its serious consideration.

A weekly Sabbath, one-seventh portion of our time, is a *Divine Institution*, and is of *perpetual obligation*. It is not what some persons are inclined to regard as a super-added gift to man *after the fall*, and in consequence of what has been called the “curse of labour.” The darkness with which sin covered the earth is graciously relieved, although it is not removed by its light, it is true; but that was neither the sole nor the immediate cause of the appointment. The manner in which the Institution

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of the Sabbath is set before us in the first mention thereof is well worthy of our observation. "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it He had rested from all His work which God created and made." (Gen. ii. 1—3.) What are we to understand by *His* resting from all the work which He had made? And what by His *blessing* the day and *sanctifying* it? If the expressions mean anything at all they mean that the day was set apart from common uses, that is, from the ordinary employments of life, for the religious use of man; that thus it might become the instrument of conveying special blessings by those acts of religious meditation and worship which were to be more formally and fully exercised on that day, and by which man was graciously allowed to hold a more intimate intercourse with his Maker.

"Thus you learn, that the observance of

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a Sabbath was not first enjoined at the giving of the law of Moses ; but was instituted at the creation of the world, and became obligatory upon all the posterity of Adam, whether Jews or Gentiles, and a pledge of the kindness and good-will of God to them. You may remark, too, that if the religious observance of one day in seven was necessary to man in his state of innocence, that he might be called from the lighter employments of dressing and keeping the garden, when no cares of life oppressed his mind, and no corrupting examples were near him ; it is much more necessary for us to be carefully observant of that sacred day, who are in so much the greater danger of forgetting God through the influence of the manifold anxieties of life, and the more powerful circumstances of temptation in which we are placed. You will not omit to notice also that that day was not made a day of rest only, but a hallowed, a sanctified day ; which can only mean, that it was set apart for religious services, to the exclusion of every other ; and that it is therefore to be regarded not so much as a restraint put

upon man, as a grant made to him of a specially gracious character. We are therefore never to regard this institution as a weariness, like the corrupt Jews reproved by the Prophet; but to call 'the day of the Lord honourable, full of delight;' and with joy bring into His house the offerings of our praise, and there celebrate at once our creation and redemption." (*Watson's Conversations for the Young.*) There is a healthiness of tone in the views here expressed which is truly refreshing in these latitudinarian times, and it will be our comfort as well as our safety not only to embrace, but ever to hold them fast, and carry them out in our general conduct. Sabbath rest, Sabbath worship, Sabbath reading, and Sabbath enjoyments are all distinguished *in themselves*, and are designed by the Giver for our own improvement and welfare, as well for the body as for the soul. And to prostitute the hours of this hallowed day, or any of them, to worldly purposes for worldly gain, is a dishonour to Him as well as a wrong to ourselves.

This applies with all its force to nations as well as to individuals. It seems scarcely

possible for any one carefully to read God's holy Word without being convinced of this truth. As a *sign* between Him and His people *as a nation* it is to be specially observed. "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily My Sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you. Ye shall keep the Sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you: every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the Sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord:" (or, as we read in the margin, "holiness to the Lord:") "whosoever doeth any work in the Sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death. Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel for ever: for in six days the Lord

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made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day He rested, and was refreshed." (Exodus xxxi. 12—17.) I might quote other passages to the same effect, but this one is so exhaustive that I will content myself by referring you to the parallel passages given in the margin in this place, and by coming to the *law* and the *testimony*, receiving both from the lips of Jehovah Himself as the sole authority in the matter, we shall be rightly instructed therein. Let us, therefore, search the records for ourselves, and prepare our hearts to seek the law of the Lord and to do it. This will be the best evidence we can have, and it will give us the greatest possible satisfaction.

Nor is it less apparent that national blessings attend the due observance of the Sabbath as commanded, and that national curses follow upon disobedience thereto. Let me quote the following verses in confirmation of this:—"Thus said the Lord unto me; Go and stand in the gate of the children of the people, whereby the Kings of Judah come in, and by the which they go out, and in all the gates of Jerusalem; and



say unto them, Hear ye the word of the Lord, ye Kings of Judah, and all Judah, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, that enter in by these gates: thus saith the Lord; Take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the Sabbath day, nor bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem; neither carry forth a burden out of your houses on the Sabbath day, neither do ye any work, but hallow ye the Sabbath day, as I commanded your fathers. But they obeyed not, neither inclined their ear, but made their neck stiff, that they might not hear, nor receive instruction. And it shall come to pass, if ye diligently hearken unto Me, saith the Lord, to bring in no burden through the gates of this city on the Sabbath day, but hallow the Sabbath day, to do no work therein; then shall there enter into the gates of this city kings and princes sitting upon the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they, and their princes, the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem: and this city shall remain for ever. And they shall come from the cities of Judah, and from the places about Jerusalem, and

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from the land of Benjamin, and from the plain, and from the mountains, and from the south, bringing burnt offerings, and sacrifices, and meat offerings, and incense, and bringing sacrifices of praise, unto the house of the Lord. But if ye will not hearken unto Me to hallow the Sabbath day, and not to bear a burden, even entering in at the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day; then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched." (Jer. xvii. 19—27.)

Language more explicit could not be used, nor could purposes of good and evil be more clearly and fully set before us. And to set ourselves against "Him with whom we have to do," and "in whom we live, and move, and have our being," must be the extreme of recklessness and folly. I well remember some years ago in the north of England visiting our Sunday-school in the town in which I was stationed, and coming to a class in which the teacher was questioning his scholars on the different parts of the bible lesson for the day. It was the 13th

chapter of the book of Proverbs. When they came to the 11th verse he asked, "What is the meaning of 'Wealth gotten by vanity?'" Finding the children unable to answer the question, he went on to say,— "Some years ago I knew a man in this town who kept a sort of general-shop, and to the grief of good people he persisted in keeping it open on the Sabbath day. When remonstrated with for doing so, as he was again and again, he would reply, that Sunday was his best day of business, and that he took more money on that day than on any other in the week. I watched his progress and observed his habits, and in the course of a few years he gave up his business and retired to live upon the wealth he had gotten. Not long after this, events of a very unlooked-for nature transpired, bringing him into difficulties, and so they continued till he was reduced to poverty; and he ended his days in the workhouse, and was buried in a pauper's grave." So true is it that "Treasures of wickedness profit nothing: but righteousness delivereth from death. The Lord will not suffer the soul of

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the righteous to famish: but He casteth away the substance of the wicked." (Prov. x. 2, 3.)

Nor is it otherwise with nations than with individuals. A nation that disregards God's "sign" between Him and it is damaging itself and its best interests. It cannot fight against God and prosper. Apart from mere argument we have the logic of facts bearing incontestible witness to the truth. History has repeated itself over and over again in marking the Divine displeasure of the national profanation of the Sabbath day. "The emperors said, in olden times, 'The people here in Constantinople, and the people there in Northern Africa *must* have amusements, and theatres *must* be open on Sunday, horses *must* race on the Sunday: the people want amusements, and must have them.' What came of it? Constantinople has been for upwards of 400 years in the hands of the Turks, who nearly blotted out Christianity from Eastern Europe. God will not have a Christianity without a Sabbath, and when it is suffered to wither, so does the form and power of Christianity."

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We cannot to-day look at nations even nearer to ourselves than this without feeling that the same tendency is alarmingly manifest, and threatening to lead to the same unhappy results. In the same direction, too, is our own beloved country following the pernicious examples set us by our neighbours, in trying to bring us into closer alliance with them. The cry is raised among ourselves that "the people *must* have amusements," and looking at the quarters whence that cry comes forth, it requires that every effort should be used by the sacramental host of God's elect in trying to defeat the purposes of these evil workers. Can you believe when you read it, that men making a profession of Godliness,—men, in fact, whose names are set before you as "ministers of religion,"—are uniting with those who openly declare that they do not believe either in Christ or His religion, for this one object of procuring "amusements for the people" on the Lord's day? Is it possible that this *Christian* England of ours has already sunk so far down in this ruinous direction? Is it possible for us to believe

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that those unevenly balanced "claims" which are so pompously set up can be tolerated, or that the unequally yoked abettors of them can ever succeed in their unholy strife? We earnestly say—God forbid!

But it will not be sufficient for us to *say*; we must *do* as well as say. If ever there was a time when the Christian church *in general*, and the Methodist section of it *in particular*, was called upon to "be up and doing," that time is now. The floodgates of licentiousness have already, alas! been thrown too widely open, and the streams which rush through them are deluging the land with crimes which make us shudder to read of; and the pestilential miasma which is thrown off from them is sadly dwarfing the manhood of our race. "Like priest like people," is an adage still forced upon our attention, and in the most charitable investigation thereof we are compelled to acknowledge the force of its application. "Has '*The Field*' come?" (a sporting newspaper) enquired a person a short time ago, who had just returned from "morning service."

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The effect of the "service" was not, alas! a love for bible-reading, nor yet for religious conversation; but the uppermost desire was to peruse the columns of a sporting newspaper! If this were a solitary case it might tend to alleviate one's grief, but unhappily it is but a specimen of multitudes whose "worship" is of the same kind and character. "Boating," "amusements on the lawn," or "in the garden," together with "public suppers" in the evening, following in the wake of "morning service" on the holy Sabbath, sound strangely in the ears of devout worshippers. Yet such practices are by no means uncommon, and, I am very much afraid, are rapidly increasing.

The *tone* of feeling which possesses the mind is a point I wish specially to observe. The "rest" of the Sabbath is one from secular service for the *mind* as well as for the body. "He who labours with his *mind* by worldly schemes and plans on the Sabbath day is as culpable as he who labours with his *hands* in his accustomed calling." (*Dr. Adam Clarke.*) In this respect also, we shall be gainers by keeping our minds

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free from worldly things till the proper time arrives for us again to enter upon their legitimate prosecution. Is it not far better, and more to our advantage, to come forth on the Monday morning with a freshness and vigour to pursue our calling in a way most likely to succeed, rather than with a mind whose powers are enfeebled through not having been allowed its needed recreation and rest from the turmoil and strife of the things of time and sense? So that in this respect, as indeed in every other in which we set aside the arrangement of our heavenly Father for the sake of adopting our own, we prove only to be damaging ourselves as well as dishonouring Him. If we would secure His blessing upon our "basket" and our "store," we must do the things which please Him.

There is a practice which some of our people have fallen into of reading newspapers on the Lord's day which, I cannot but think, is much to be deplored. I am aware that they are said to be "religious newspapers," giving accounts of the work of God, and of the extension of His kingdom in the earth.



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There are papers, no doubt, bearing distinctive "religious" titles, and containing "religious intelligence," but do they not contain as much, and indeed more intelligence of a purely earthly and secular character? And have they not been known to create discussions upon the politics, and also upon the commercial interests of the day? And so far as those conversations and discussions have been allowed to take place, they have distracted the mind, and rendered it unfit for the "worship" as well as the "rest" of the holy day. Besides, the papers of this class are not very numerous,—one or two in the week at most—so that really the "religious intelligence" they contain would be very helpful in the midst of the bustle of life during the days of toil and labour. I have sometimes thought that the practice has arisen from a want of due consideration on the subject. At any rate it can scarcely be expected that either the influence or the example can be "sanctified" to the good of the circle in which it prevails.

The free and familiar use which is made

of railway trains, and other public conveyances, especially in our large towns, seems to me to be altogether out of keeping with the quiet and rest of this sacred day. How strangely it sounds to hear religious people say, "I was afraid of being late, and so I hailed a cab," or "I just caught the train which was passing at the time!" And yet the manner in which the remarks are made indicates but too plainly how lightly they regard this habit. The poor cab-drivers and railway-servants are not considered as needing a Sabbath themselves, nor as being entitled to it. And so for the sake of our own ease—or shall I not rather say, for our own "needless self-indulgence?"—we contribute our share to the oppression and injury of those men. The law is, "That thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou." However broad may be the views entertained respecting the "works of necessity and mercy," they never can be made to sanction such God-dishonouring and soul-destroying schemes as these Sunday labours are. Is it not our duty rather to use our influence in

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trying to put down the gigantic systems of Sabbath desecration which, alas! are spreading so much mischief throughout our land? O let us take care that we partake not of other men's sins, and that the blood of precious souls be not required at our hands at the last day. Is it not appalling that any man should have it to say that he "never saw his children after they were born, except in bed," and solely because his calling as an omnibus driver required seven days in the week instead of six? And is it not an alarming sign of *our* times that cab and omnibus proprietors should be found in formal deputation waiting on the President of our Conference, imploring him to use his influence in trying to put a stop to these evils, assigning as their reason the fact that but for the demand of their vehicles by religious people they should not need to keep their establishments open on the Sabbath day at all? Verily, my dear friends, when such cries as these echo in our ears it is high time for us to awake to a sense of our duty,—*and to do it.*

But I must not detain you longer now, as

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the time usually allotted to these services has more than expired, and as I may possibly have occasion to allude to some other matters in connection with this subject. Yet I do hope you will all give it your most serious, thoughtful, and *prayerful* attention. As professors of Christ's holy religion, having our names enrolled in His church's records, we stand before the world as His representatives,—as lights to enlighten the darkness which covers it. And these are not times for any of us to be idle or indifferent in whatever concerns His interests. We may be reproached for our “puritanical” or “Methodist” exclusiveness, and be held up as butts for ridicule and scorn because of our steadfast adherence to the principles of righteousness and truth. Still this can do us no harm, for we shall be gainers and not losers by bearing reproach for His sake.

May the Holy Spirit give us the wisdom from above which is profitable to direct, and the grace we need in the faithful performance of this most important duty!

*Let us pray.*

## No. IX.

### TEMPERANCE.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

The subject on which I wish to address you this evening is *Temperance*, one of the fruits of the Spirit, and one which was so earnestly inculcated by the Apostle Paul, both in his public ministry and in his pastoral oversight of the churches under his care. Considering the many snares that are laid in our pathway to heaven, the subtle devices which beset us at every turn and in different forms, it behoves us to be ever "standing on our guard, and watching unto prayer." "Ye did run well, who did hinder you?" is a question which has frequently to be put to many around us who once bid fair for the kingdom of heaven, but who, alas! have turned aside from the

holy commandment delivered unto them. I have been surprised as well as pained, while searching into the cause of these departures from Christ, to find how readily they have yielded themselves up as a prey to the enemy. No reason has been given by them, nor any intelligent ground of excuse assigned for their leaving the good way. The world, and the things of the world have so absorbed their attention, that the Book of God—the Christian's only directory—has seldom, if ever, been consulted; and a general indifference to all that is good has followed. Had they but prayerfully and diligently sought direction from God's Word, His cause might have been saved the reproach they have brought upon it. Looking to the world instead of looking to Christ, they have been deceived; their own souls have sustained a grievous loss; and they have been again entangled in the yoke of bondage.

We must never forget that *self-denial* is an essential part of Christ's religion. Nothing is more clearly or plainly set before us than this:—"And He said to

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them all, If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me." (Luke ix. 23.) There is a danger of mistaking this most important duty, and setting up our own judgment as a standard for our conduct. Some of the evils by which we are surrounded appear to us so abhorrent in themselves, and so mischievous in their tendency, that we start back from them with a fixed purpose never to allow them to come within the circle of our practice at all; while there are things equally revolting to others, and as purposely set aside by them, but which we find no difficulty whatever in the free and familiar use thereof. But the world, its spirit and customs, "the desire of the eyes, and the pride of life," if not carefully guarded against will steal our affections, and ensnare our souls.

So much danger, therefore, is there of missing the mark, and of erring from the truth, that we cannot too closely adhere to the expression of the Saviour as quoted above. "Let him deny *himself*." This is the one fixed standard from which we can never

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depart and be safe. "Some self-denial there may be," says Baxter, "in the un-sanctified :—many of them would leave a little pleasure or profit rather than be damned ; and many had rather suffer a little, than venture upon eternal sufferings. But I beseech you, remember that this is the lowest degree of self-denial that is saving, to set more by Christ and the hopes of glory, than by all this world and life itself ; and to be habitually resolved to forsake life and all, rather than to forsake Him. No less than this is proper self-denial, or will prove you Christians, and in a state of life. This was the trial that Christ put one to, that had thought to have been His disciple : ' Yet lackest thou one thing : sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven : and come, follow Me.' (Luke xviii. 22.) Not that every man must actually sell all, but every man must set more by heaven than all, and therefore part with all when Christ would have him : and he that is not thus resolved, let him go never so far in all other things, doth yet lack 'one thing,' and such a 'one thing'



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as he shall never be saved without. For the meaning of the text is, that Christ would try by this command, whether he set more by anything than Him, and whether he set more by heaven or earth; and so would have us all to judge of ourselves by the same evidence within, though He put not all on the same way of discovering it. Many a man can deny self the superfluities of pleasure, and, as this rich man did, can avoid enormous crimes, and say of whoredom, and theft, and drunkenness, and oppression, and gross deceit, 'All these have I avoided from my youth.' Education may moderate some selfish desires, and natural temper may further that moderation; and custom, and good company, and holy precepts, may yet do more; and wit may teach men to do or suffer somewhat rather than to run on the wrath of God; and therefore many thousands may deny self the pleasure of some inordinate lust, or of some recreation, or excess in meat or drink, and yet be far from denying life and all, and so from the true self-denial of a Christian: nay, a man may deny self for

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self in many particulars, and so may please self more than he denieth it."

This is the point I want you specially to consider. "Every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things." (1 Cor. ix. 25.) "The mastery" is the one grand object to be sought after by every follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. But what mastery? The mastery of self, undoubtedly. What else is there to master? "All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." (1 John ii. 16.) So Paul goes on to say in the connection referred to:—"But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." Temperance in *some* things, temperance in *many* things, we are impressed with the observance of not unfrequently: but the temperance in *all things* is that which sets forth God's requirements; and my anxiety on your behalf is, that you will not lower the standard thus set up, nor exchange it for any other, however plausibly

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it may be spoken of. "To the law and to the testimony : if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." (Isa. viii. 20.) In God's word we have a *sure* guide,—“a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our path.” (Ps. cxix. 105.) And by following this light we shall be led safely through all the snares of life, and find that the pathway we tread is solid ground. “Not as menpleasers ; but as the servants of Christ,” we shall then do “the will of God from the heart.” (Ephes. vi. 6.)

“I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection.” This phrase comprehends the whole matter. “Fleshly lusts which war against the soul ” must be mortified, put to death, or the mastery will be theirs ; and if they get it in possession their tyrannizing influence will be pitiable in the extreme. Their reign is a reign of terror greatly to be deprecated and avoided. They have already slain their thousands and tens of thousands, and they are still, alas ! going rapidly on from conquering to conquest, leaving nothing in their train but mourning, lamentation, and woe.

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In order, however, to guard ourselves against the danger of being enslaved by our lusts, let us look carefully at the subject in its several aspects and relationships. The Apostle James speaks of "the whole body" being "defiled" by "the tongue." "The tongue," he says, "is a little member, and boasteth great things, but it is full of deadly poison." (James iii. 5—8.) The amount of intemperance of which it is guilty is frightful to contemplate. Its streams are very numerous and very full, spreading a most baneful influence wherever they go. The mischief that is done through such widespread intemperance is sad indeed, and you seldom hear a voice lifted up against it. Yet the truth abideth for ever: "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain." (James i. 26.) "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body" (ii. 3). "For since the tongue is a very loose and versatile engine, which the least breath of thought doth stir, and set on going any way, it can-

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not but need much attention to keep it either in a steady rest, or in a right motion. . . . Nothing is more obvious to common experience, than that persons, who, in the rest of their demeanour and dealings, appear blameless, yea, who in regard to other points of duty would seem nice and precise, are extremely peccant in this kind. We may see divers, otherwise much restraining and much denying themselves, who yet indulge themselves in a strange licentiousness in speaking whatever their humour or their passion dictates. Many, in other respects harmless (who would not for anything smite or slay folks), we may observe with their tongue to commit horrible outrages upon any man that comes in their way. Frequently persons very punctual in their dealings are very unjust in their language, cheating and robbing their neighbour of his reputation by envious detraction and hard censure. They who abhor shedding a man's blood will yet, without any scruple or remorse, by calumnious tales and virulent reproaches, assassinate his credit, and murder his good name, although to him perhaps far

more dear and precious than his life. Commonly such as are greatly staunch in other enjoyments of pleasure, are enormously intemperate in speaking, and very incontinent of their tongue: men in all other parts of morality rigorously sober, are often in this very wild and dissolute. Yea, not seldom, we may observe, that even mighty pretenders to godliness, and zealous practisers of devotion, cannot forbear speaking things plainly repugnant to God's law, and very prejudicial to His honour. St. Paulinus, in his excellent Epistle to Celantia testifies: '*Such a lust (saith he concerning the ill-governance of speech) of this evil hath invaded the minds of men, that even those who have far receded from other vices, do yet fall into this, as into the last snare of the devil.*'" (*Dr. Barrow's Works, Vol. i., pp. 124, 125.*)

The appetite is another snare which is laid in our pathway, and which needs to be scrupulously guarded against lest we become a prey thereto. "When thou sittest to eat with a ruler, consider diligently what is before thee: and put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite. Be not

desirous of his dainties: for they are deceitful meat." (Prov. xxiii. 1—3.) From the moment that sin was committed its deceitfulness has been most apparent. This was its first fruit, and the harvest has been very abundant. "When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat." (Gen. iii. 6.) Not that she wanted food; that had been plentifully supplied by her Maker before, and independently of this, thus leaving no ground for excuse. Yet how true a type has it proved to be of the descendants of the unhappy pair who thus disobeyed His holy commandment, not being content with such things as He gave them. "Needless self-indulgence," therefore, stands in the forefront of forbidden things, and it will be our wisdom ever to refuse taking the bait which is still presented to us upon the "deceitful" hook. It may be sweet to the taste, but it will be the gall of asps within us. "Sin's murdering morsels will deceive those that devour them. Adam's apple was a bitter sweet; Esau's mess was a bitter sweet. After the meal is ended, then comes

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the reckoning. Men must not think to dance and dine with the devil, and then to sup with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven ; to feed upon the poison of asps, and yet that the viper's tongue should not slay them." (*Brooks.*)

Apart from everything else, temperance, both in eating and drinking, is essential to the maintenance of health. This is one of the most invaluable gifts which we receive at the hands of our Creator, and which is designed to make life itself both pleasant and useful. But intemperance is a sworn, though subtle foe, and will assuredly succeed in impairing it if yielded to and indulged in. The vigour of both the body and the mind will suffer loss through its paralyzing influence, and their powers will become enervated and enfeebled. A healthy mind in a healthy body is what we specially need, so as to serve our generation by the will of God ; and this can only be secured by temperate habits. In this age of luxurious living the danger of eating and drinking to excess must be apparent to every one who thinks soberly on the subject. Fashion is



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at all times exacting in its demands, and when we are invited to eat and to drink according to the fashions and customs of the day, it becomes all Christian people to consider, not only the abuse of God's good gifts, which are sent for our benefit and comfort, but also the degrading effects which are produced thereby. The maxim that we should "eat to live, and not live to eat," will be always safe in this matter.

"On so delicate a point, and with such diversified views upon it," I am asked, "would you then draw one particular line of conduct, and prescribe one arbitrary rule for all to observe?" To which I answer, No, by no means; for I should greatly err if I were to attempt such a thing. It has been done, I know, and has failed, as all such instances must fail, in the absence of Scriptural authority. The fact that in the Saviour's own day the widest extremes met in an attempt of this kind ought ever to make us careful in the judgment we pronounce upon each other. This is His own remark on the point I refer to: "But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It

is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented. For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil. The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children." (Matt. xi. 16—19.) This is a decision which must ever be taken as *final*, for against it there can be no appeal. "Wisdom is justified of her children." This is the one fixed and unalterable rule of conduct, and if the testimony thus borne be set aside, or even lowered from its own proper place, no one will wonder at the latitudinarianism into which we may fall on the one hand, or the exclusive sectarianism on the other. "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." (1 Cor. x. 31.) Here you will be always safe. Walk by this rule, live in this spirit, and you will not fulfil the lusts of the flesh.

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There is yet another aspect of this question which I must not overlook, and that is the intemperance of dress. To attempt a comparison between any of the aspects of this saddening subject, as to the ruin which is occasioned by their separate action and influence, would, perhaps, be too venturesome to secure general approval. Yet I cannot but fear that the mischief resulting from the intemperance of dress is truly alarming. The number of its victims is legion, and the ease with which they become a prey to this fell destroyer is cause of deep regret to every thoughtful and considerate mind. The tyranny of fashion I have already alluded to, and here it seems to have full play. For Christian and religious people to set aside the plain directions of the Word of God, and eagerly submit themselves to the instructions of the Book of Fashion, is humiliating in the extreme, especially when we consider the authority upon which it rests its claims to our obedience. We are supposed, as professors of Christ's holy religion, to obey Him rather than men. If, therefore, the world with its fashions is

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to have the priority and the pre-eminence, where then is the meaning of that profession? "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" (Rom. vi. 16.) Nothing can be plainer or more conclusive than this. If, therefore, ye serve the Lord Jesus, let these go their way. "As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lust in your ignorance." (1 Peter i. 14.)

I could tell you of instances in which my own spirit has been greatly pained, and which have caused deep distress to the persons themselves, when this foolish and intemperate habit has been indulged by members of our Society; but our time is gone, and I will not detain you by relating them. One, however, I must refer to. In one of my Circuits a dear young person was brought to the Saviour, and began to meet in my class. Her course continued bright and joyous for some time, and her happy spirit made hopeful progress in the Divine life. After a while her mother selected for her a

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certain style of dress at which she was startled, and she very modestly, yet very earnestly, said, "Mamma, that does not become me as a Methodist, and a professor of Christ's religion." To her great regret, however, the mother (a Methodist also) insisted upon her wearing it, and it proved, alas! but the beginning of a sad declension in piety. As it is easy to imagine, Satan took advantage of the occasion; and although his work was by what some would call slow degrees, yet her mind was effectually drawn away into scenes of dissipation and folly which were mournful to witness. Never shall I forget my last interview with her. Amid bitter tears she said,—“I know you are right, Mr. Portrey, and I deeply deplore the fact, but I am not now what I once was.” I never saw her again, and have a thousand times wished I could but hear that she had returned to her Saviour.

O my dear friends, do let me implore you to be on your guard against this ruinous and destructive snare of the enemy. Methodist mothers, especially, I intreat to teach their children to array themselves in modest

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apparel, such as becometh godliness. Let them never have to say their "mother was their counsellor to do wickedly." May the good Spirit of our God give you all wisdom and discernment in this matter! And I pray that all of us may guard ourselves against the snares which beset us in every one of the aspects of this question, and that we may have grace to be "*temperate in all things.*"

*Let us pray.*

No. X.

## THINGS IN GENERAL.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

At our last meeting, although I detained you beyond the time usually allowed for this service, yet I did not say all I wished on the subject we then had before us. And as there are some other points which may be of interest to us all, I have thought it best to refer you again for a short time to their further consideration; and then to fill up the rest by looking at things in general.

The gigantic evils resulting from intemperance, and those especially as set forth in their several aspects in my former address, may well be pleaded as an excuse—if excuse be needed—for dwelling so much upon it. That it is no new thing is evident from the authorities I have quoted; and if you could, or would, read those authors yourselves, you would find that the extracts,

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though somewhat lengthy, yet give but a brief view of what they have put on record on the subject as a whole. No, my friends, so far from its being new, we trace it, without any break whatever, up to the introduction of sin into our world. In the triple character given of the fall by the pen of inspiration, we have "the lust of the eyes," as well as "the lust of the flesh," and "the pride of life;" so that this inlet to the heart has as much need to be guarded and kept from intemperance as the others. The force of this is sufficiently expressed by the Saviour's own language: "I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." (Matt. v. 28.) Old Dr. Manton says, "There is nothing so soon led away as the eye; it is the broker between the heart and the object; the eye gazeth and the heart lusteth; this is the window by which Satan hath crept in, and all manner of taint hath been conveyed into the soul. In the first sin, Eve was corrupted this way. The fruit was pleasant to the eyes as well as good for food, so she took



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thereof and did eat. We read of Potiphar's wife, 'she cast her eyes on Joseph,' Gen. xxxix. 7; Achan, Josh. vii. 21,—'When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them and took them.' First he *saw*, then he *coveted*, then he *took* them, then he *hid* them, then Israel falls, and he is attached by lot. . . . Naboth's vineyard was ever in Ahab's eye, as being near his palace, therefore he is troubled and falls sick for it. 1 Kings xxi. 1, 2."

Instances of this kind might be multiplied, both from the holy Scriptures, and also from other sources, showing the sad consequences of this evil; so that the prayer of the Psalmist is always appropriate: "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity, and quicken Thou me in Thy way." (Ps. cxix. 37.) It is said of Demosthenes, the orator, concerning the beautiful Lais, when he was asked an excessive sum of money to behold her, that he replied, "I will not buy repentance so dear; I am not so ill a merchant as to sell eternals for temporals. If intemper-



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to mar the worship upon which you enter when you "go to the house of the Lord." A respectable farmer once told me of the danger he felt himself exposed to when going along the road or through the fields to the chapel on the Sabbath day, by a tendency in his mind to compare the crops one with another, and this year's "yield" with the last, and other things of the same kind, all combining to draw his attention from the one great object he had before him. Nor was his case, I apprehend, a solitary one; and considering that our "adversary goeth about" on his mischievous errands, we cannot be too intent in seeking to defeat him. I have been surprised to find persons who have attended the most impressive and soul-stirring services, pass so quickly away from their hallowed character to other topics which, to say the least, have been very questionable indeed. A frequent perusal of Mr. Wesley's sermon on this subject (*Wandering Thoughts*) would be of great benefit to you in this respect.

A devout demeanour in the sanctuary is also required when drawing near to God.

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The habit of *sitting* while engaged in public prayer is greatly to be deplored, yet it is one which, alas! has become very general in our congregations. Standing and kneeling are attitudes which are expressly named in the holy Scriptures, but I do not remember to have read of any one sitting while engaged in this sacred exercise. When we are "in audience with the Deity," we surely ought to have respect to so august a personage. The attitude which would not be tolerated in the presence of an earthly monarch, and which we would scorn to present, should not surely be taken when we approach the King of kings, the Lord of lords, and the only Ruler of princes. How different was the feeling which possessed the heart of the Psalmist when he exclaimed: "O come, let us worship, and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker." (Ps. xcv. 6.) Would any of us think of sitting when we enter into our closet to pray to God, or when we gather around the family altar to worship Him there? Why then should the difference be made when we go to His own House of Prayer?

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Another thing to be duly and constantly observed among all Christian people, is a forbearing and a forgiving spirit. That we shall ever be able to see, eye to eye, in every little matter connected with our profession of religion is a thing not likely to be accomplished; so that for any of us to shut ourselves up to a hard and fast line *of our own fixing*, and to judge every one else thereby, is to lay ourselves open to the charge of an exclusiveness which cannot meet with general approval. Do not misunderstand me, and put a construction upon my words which they will not bear. You know my mind too well concerning *laxity* of conduct to suspect for a moment that I mean even a tendency in that direction. *Forbearance* is a very different thing from *laxity*, and a great deal of ill-feeling will be prevented if we at all times cherish this grace of the Spirit towards our fellow-travellers to Zion. "But," I am asked, "do you think we ought to submit to such and such things, and not to show our displeasure at their being said and done against us?" To which I answer No, nor yet do I think it is right to resent such

sayings and doings in the spirit in which the question is asked. We are sometimes told that there is a wrong way of doing things, as well as a right one, and it is this danger I want to guard you against. My meaning is fully expressed in Mr. Wesley's sermon "On Love." It will do you all good to read it, and not only to read it, but to treasure it up in your minds, and to make the principle therein laid down *the rule* by which to be guided in this matter. The second head of the discourse is that which I particularly refer to, beginning at the fourth paragraph: "The effects or properties of this love," etc. The Apostle Paul expresses it thus: "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye." (Coloss. iii. 12, 13.) Selfdenial must be exercised in this, as in all other parts of our Christian profession, or we can never obey the royal law of God which "is fulfilled in one word,

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even in this,—Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” The doing of this will save us much unpleasant feeling—many bickerings, heart-burnings, and jealousies—against the person or persons concerned. Moreover, it will be helpful to our own prosperity in the way of peace. Resolve, then, I entreat you, in the strength of Divine grace, to be proof against this snare of the devil, into which many have fallen to their sorrow, and some I fear to their eternal ruin.

Again, contentment with our providential lot is necessary to our establishment in grace. I have known much mischief done to members of our Society, by their becoming restless and dissatisfied with their ordinary calling in life. Their desire for change has not arisen from want or from difficulties as to their worldly comforts; but mainly, perhaps entirely, from a wish to rise higher, and to take a somewhat more prominent position in society at large. “A better situation,” “an increase of income,” “a higher station,” are things which are often pleaded as reasons justifying this desire, and so far as these things are concerned *in*

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*themselves*, no one will wonder at its being encouraged.

Yet in taking this view simply, we have only looked at *one* side of the question. Should not the duties and privileges of public worship, religious intercourse, and means of usefulness in the service of God, be taken into consideration also? Can it be called a *providential opening* that invites us to the former, while it shuts us out from the latter? Can we expect to prosper therein, and to have God's blessing upon us "in the city," and "in the field," in our "basket," and in our "store," and in all that we set our "hand unto?" Never, therefore, let the one side be looked at without the other, for we cannot succeed without His blessing upon us. We cannot reverse the Divine order and be happy,—we cannot do it and be safe.

To this one cause we trace—painfully trace—numbers of those who are entered in our schedules as having "ceased to meet." "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world." (2 Tim. iv. 10.) When necessity arises it is our duty to bow thereto,



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but when we are doing well, and realizing a comfortable livelihood, and, moreover, have opportunities of usefulness in the service of Christ, it should certainly make us pause, and consider thoroughly the whole subject, before we take a single step in this direction. Having myself witnessed much discomfort arising out of hasty removals from one place to another, and through engagements entered into without due consideration as to their probable results, I speak with confidence when I advise you not to meddle with change unless you are quite satisfied that the cloud moves before you. You may *do better* it is true; but you may *do worse*, as many, alas! have already done.

To those of you who are young, and are looking forward to households of your own, I would say, be sure to take God with you into the engagements and preparations you make for so weighty an undertaking. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part

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hath he that believeth with 'an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." (2 Cor. vi. 14—18.) In selecting and fixing upon a companion in life, let this caution be strictly observed. Let the Word of God be your only rule, for you cannot follow another and be *safe*. Nor is it a matter of little importance as to the *character* of the family into whose circle you enter. It should concern you, not only as to *whom* you marry, but *whose*. Let your calmest and best judgment be exercised in the choice you make, for upon it your future domestic comfort greatly depends.

First and foremost among the arrangements of your household set up the domestic

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altar, and offer thereon the morning and evening sacrifice. It is particularly noted concerning Abraham, when he arrived at his new home in the land of promise, that the first thing he did was to build "an altar unto the Lord." And so again when he removed from the plain of Moreh unto the mountain on the East of Bethel, the first thing recorded of him is, that there also "he builded an altar unto the Lord, and called upon the name of the Lord." (Gen. xii. 8.) Matthew Henry, in his commentary on these passages, says that "wherever we have a tent God must have an altar." I have been much pained at times to find even in Methodist families the sad neglect of this most important duty. It is sometimes remarked with a good deal of surprise that children of "such pious parents should turn out as they do." Perhaps the surprise would be somewhat lessened if the whole of their training were but known. "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths." (Prov. iii. 6.)

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“To God, most worthy to be praised,  
Be our domestic altars raised ;  
Who, Lord of heaven, yet deigns to come,  
And sanctify our humblest home.”

One thing more let me name to you. In making arrangements for your children, either in their education, or in selecting professions and situations in life, do not be beguiled by “splendid openings,” or “lucrative offers,” when they involve an abandonment of religious privileges and Methodist services. The saddening effects produced through falling into these snares are too manifest to leave a moment’s doubt on the subject ; and not unfrequently do the children themselves mourn over the dangers surrounding them through being so situated. On this point, too, as well as on the one named in a previous part of this Address, I will venture to repeat,—We cannot reverse the Divine order, and be safe. (See Matt. vi. 33.) Mark especially the two *seekings*, that of the Gentiles, and that urged by the Saviour, and then consider fully the phrase, “All these things shall be *added* unto you.” I am not ashamed to say at all times, and

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anywhere, that it was ever my highest ambition, and my greatest concern on behalf of my children, that they should be gathered into the same fold as myself, and be united to the same people. And in every step taken relating to their future lot this point was always kept in view.

Once more. A regular observance of, and attendance upon the Lord's Supper,\* is enjoined by the Saviour upon all who make a profession of His name, and yet the laxity I have met with in some of our Societies regarding this most solemn ordinance has caused me much anxiety of mind. To commemorate the death by which we live, ought not surely to be considered an irksome or a difficult duty to perform. Rather ought we to rejoice and be glad that we are called to the enjoyment of so exalted a privilege. Whence, then, arises this laxity? Why is this most solemn and important duty so trifled with and neglected? I cannot tell; for I must confess that I have never yet heard an intelligent reason given, either by the persons themselves, or by those who

\* See Address No. VI., latter part.

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have now and then essayed to give one for them.

“ ‘And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is My body. And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is My blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.’ (Matt. xxvi. 26—28.) This is the first mention which Christ makes of a testament, as though now His promises deserved the name of testament, because the seal is set unto them, which before this sacrament were not sealed, but like a bare writing without a signature. This word *testament* doth imply a promise, and therefore teacheth us, that the sacrament doth confirm, and strengthen, and nourish our faith, because it sealeth the promise which we should believe.” (*H. Smith.*) Can we then neglect this “sacrament, which is a witness of God’s promises, a remembrance of Christ’s death, and a seal of our adoption,” without suffering loss? Can we do it and be guiltless before Him?

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Our Love-Feasts, too, are sadly neglected by many of our members. I am bound to say that I am jealous for the spirituality of our people when I find either the Class-Meetings or the Love-Feasts treated as though they were of but little importance. Time-honoured as they are in themselves, and heaven-honoured as they are in their gracious effects, one loves to linger over their memory, and to call up the hallowed associations which are connected therewith. The tendency of the age to modernize everything according to its own notions, and to make everything bow to its own yoke, threatens also to exert a mischievous influence amongst our Societies. Hence the supercilious utterances which are sometimes echoed in our ears, "that such antiquated and old-fashioned customs ought to be done away, not being suited to modern society." To persons who look upon these things as "*customs*" only, we cannot, of course, wonder at their judgment concerning them. But I trust none of you will ever know either the state of heart or life which prompts such utterances. Rather let it be

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yours to live down the reproach which is implied therein, by practising the opposite, and by teaching all who come within the circle of your influence not to remove the ancient landmarks which our fathers have set. Whatever tends to chill the ardour of your piety, avoid; whatever tends to quicken and enflame it, cherish and practise. If you will diligently attend to this you will prove *from your own experience* which cometh from above, and which from beneath.

May the Triune Jehovah give you wisdom and grace rightly to understand, and fully to perform the duties which devolve upon you, and keep you faithful to the end!  
Amen!

*Let us pray.*



No. XI.

CLASS LEADERS AND THEIR WORK.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

I have already referred to the fact, that our existence, as a part of Christ's universal church, is directly traceable to the wisdom and goodness of God. It arose, not through any preconceived notion of its Founder, but simply by the hand of God opening the way, and beckoning him to follow therein. Nor yet do we trace this leading in the outset merely, but also in its successive stages until the system has become one of the most potent influences for good in this fallen and sin-stricken world. Of this we justly make our boast, and in this same confidence of boasting we trust it will be perpetuated until the grand consummation of all things.

“Mr. Wesley did not set himself to frame an ecclesiastical constitution, or to devise any particular economy for the guidance of

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his people. All his early measures were directed to effect the conversion of sinners, and the building up of believers. Hence we find the first few Annual Conferences fully occupied in discussing the great doctrines of the gospel faith, and the most effectual manner of preaching them, with scarcely any reference to ecclesiastical economy or discipline. The spirit of the whole is, 'You have nothing to do but to save souls. Therefore spend and be spent in the work.'

"The conduct of Mr. Wesley in the organization of the Societies was in perfect harmony with this sentiment. He devised no theory of government, nor digested any particular economy. His Rules of Society are eminently evangelical and practical. Having been made instrumental in the conversion of sinners, he took such measures as appeared to him best adapted to furnish them with religious guidance, and to maintain and extend the work of grace. Hence Class Leaders, Local Preachers, Stewards, and Itinerant Preachers, arose in the body, and mightily contributed to the extension

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of the Societies." (*Smith's Polity of Wesleyan Methodism.*)

Yet so orderly as he was in all his habits of life, it was not likely that our Founder, thrust as he was into this great work, and finding it continually growing in his hands, would leave it unprovided for in any of its details. Everything must be done according to *method*, and the whole of its parts must be compacted together into one symmetrical whole. With him all things, according to Apostolic and Scriptural authority, must be done decently and in order.

Is it not to this, to a very great extent at least, that we trace its marvellous progress, and its wide-spread influence? And although it cost both himself and his immediate successors great effort and much difficulty, yet they firmly adhered to what they felt to be imperative duty. After repeated examinations of the foundation upon which the superstructure was to be raised, and a thorough testing of the system which they were commissioned to establish, they had evidence sufficiently clear to convince them that both the one and the other

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came from the "Great Builder of His church below." With this singleness of aim the work was begun and continued, solely for the salvation of men, and the glory of God. No personal ambition, no earthly aggrandizement, no desire of fame ever entered their minds or influenced their motives. They received their commission direct "from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." And when, as faithful men, they had served their own generation by the will of God, they committed the same trust to others, charging them to walk by the same rule, and to mind the same thing.

This, my dear friends, is our position to-day, and I want us all to feel the solemn weight of responsibility which is attached thereto. If we are still to extend our influence, and pull down the strongholds of sin, it must be by pursuing the same course as they did. We have listened with delight to their simple yet fervid eloquence while they have related to us their tales of triumph in this glorious service, and our hearts have kindled into a holy flame while they have

told us of the noble works performed in their own day, and in times of old. And if we would

“Triumph so,  
When all our warfare’s past,”

we must be brave and bold as were they,  
“holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.”

The part of this system which we are now more particularly to consider is that of Class-leading. Class-meeting and Class-leading, although inseparably connected together, yet possess a distinctive character which it may be worth our while to consider. Speaking of the “UNITED SOCIETY,” Mr. Wesley says—“Such a Society is no other than a company of men having the form, and seeking the power, of godliness, united in order to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they may help each other to work out their salvation.

“That it may the more easily be discerned whether they are working out their own salvation, each Society is divided into smaller

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companies called Classes, one of whom is styled *the Leader*. It is his business,

“(1,) To see each person in his class once a week, in order

“To enquire how their souls prosper ;

“To advise, reprove, comfort, or exhort, as occasion may require ;

“To receive what they are willing to give towards the support of the Gospel.”

This is the duty of a Leader to the members of his class. Can we conceive of anything more simple, more social, more truly helpful in the pilgrimage of life ? If there is meaning in the apostolic precept of Paul, “Bear ye one another’s burdens,” can it be more fully realised than in this arrangement ? And if in the doing of it we “fulfil the law of Christ,” surely the arrangement is not made in vain. A steadfast adherence to Scripture rule and Scripture precept will always have its own reward ; but a departure therefrom or an omission thereof must cause us to “suffer loss.” Moreover, in the diversities of gifts which the Spirit distributes, dividing to every man severally as He will, we have a fine illustration of the Almighty’s plan of

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working in His own Church. Just as "thoughts shut up, want air, and spoil, like bales unopened to the sun," so also will the "gifts" entrusted to us unless they are exercised and kept in use. You all know the sentence pronounced against the slothful servant who had not used his talent, but kept it laid up in a napkin. O then let us *use* the gifts committed to our care for the good of souls, and for the glory of our God!

Now, in order to keep up the freshness and vigour which are required so as to have your classes in a healthy state, it will be of much service to you to read the "Cautions and Directions addressed to Class Leaders" in the preface of your Class-Book. I cannot but think that if this were done—done frequently, and in earnest prayer to God for His blessing upon it—you would be much comforted in your own souls, and at the same time be a yet greater blessing to those who are committed to your care. I have known Leaders who have scrupulously observed the time fixed for meeting their classes as one to be specially prepared for beforehand; and they have so arranged their business

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affairs as not to allow them to interfere with their appointment, or to set it aside. The one with whom it was my privilege to meet before my entrance upon the work of the Ministry, was a person at the head of a large business, who had its management mostly in his own hands. Yet, notwithstanding this, he never allowed the evenings for meeting his class to be interfered with thereby. He was careful, too, to withdraw from the bustle of the world for a considerable time before the hour arrived, on purpose to shut himself in with God. His customers became so fully acquainted with his habits that they avoided calling on that evening, or if they were obliged to come they knew that they would have to be served by one of the subordinates in the concern. Seldom was "absent" marked against the names of any of his members, and the times of refreshing with which the class was visited are still remembered with sacred delight. Such a course, I cannot but think, might be pursued by most, if not by all of you. Perhaps it is. I have not the slightest idea that it is not. Yet should I speak to one who is not in the



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habit of doing so, I would urge him by all means to adopt it forthwith. Of the result I have not the slightest doubt whatever.

The simple and confiding nature of our union has been our strength, and I am most anxious that a bond so dear to us all should not be enfeebled, but that it should become even more firm and enduring. "The mutual faith both of you and me" is the ground of this bond, and if in simplicity and godly sincerity we continue to have our conversation honest between each other, we shall continue—

"A band of love, a three-fold cord,  
Which never can be broke."

In this spirit, and with this object in view, you will not have to complain of barrenness and leanness of soul, nor yet of thin attendance at your meetings; but, on the contrary, you will find that the hours glide sweetly and happily away, in mutual fellowship, and in true Christian joy. Both yourself and your members will look for their return with anticipated delight, and the gladness of those who

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“love the habitation of God’s house, and the place where His honour dwelleth.” So at any rate my own experience testifies ; and I have no doubt, that of multitudes besides.

One of the complaints of these days is that we cannot find suitable Leaders for this department of our work. Whatever meaning this remark may be intended to carry with it, I cannot think it refers to a want of either piety or talent. If there be truth in it at all, the non-suitability must surely arise from the lack of attention of which I have just been speaking. It is not impossible, should this prove to be the case, that there has not been all that Pastoral oversight exercised by ourselves which might have been in reference to this matter. The phrase “Pastoral oversight” as applied to Leaders may possibly sound strangely in the ears of some of you, yet I cannot but think it would be of great service if it were faithfully attended to. “Let each of them be diligently examined concerning his method of meeting a class.” “Let the Leaders converse with all the Preachers as frequently and as freely as possible.” “In meeting classes let them

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diligently enquire how every soul prospers. Not only how each person observes the outward Rules, but how they grow in the knowledge and love of God." Here is distinct allusion to pastoral relationship and pastoral oversight, and I cannot doubt that the history of our work in this united service will be found to prove that, in proportion as these duties have been faithfully attended to, so has it prospered amongst us. I say "*as they have been faithfully attended to,*" for I very much fear that in many places they are scarcely known to exist as a part of our economy. Were classes and Leaders thus met, there would not long be a lack of "suitable Leaders." From such meetings there would be raised up from time to time men—and women too—with hearts enflamed with love divine, yearning with pity towards those who are living around them without God, and without hope in the world, not only willing, but anxious to be employed to gather them into the fold of Christ. These qualifications, together with judicious counsel, and pious instruction given under pastoral guidance and oversight, would meet the

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demand for such labourers in our times as they did in the times of our fathers.

Let me note, in passing, the allusion made in the Minutes of the Conference of 1784 to the meeting in each other's classes "as often as possible." Not for the Leader himself simply to hand over the class to his brother Leader as a substitute in his absence, but for him to be present also, and be spoken to as the rest of the members. The freedom of this brotherly intercourse would tend, no doubt, not only to the strengthening of each other's hands, but also to the comforting of each other's hearts in the performance of these important duties. Everything approaching to formality, and mere routine expression should be avoided as much as possible, and the hour seldom, if ever, surpassed. Short, clear, earnest testimonies borne to their present state, the members should—as a rule—be accustomed to bear, whether it be one of joy or grief, gladness or sorrow; and a few well-chosen words spoken in reply from a heart in sympathy therewith will be sure to be blest to your mutual edification and comfort. Some-

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times I have known a suitable verse of a hymn given out and sung after the expressed experience of a member, or perhaps of several members whose experience has been somewhat similar, with good effect; and having a Hymn-book from which selections of this kind can be freely made, suited to all states and conditions, you can be well supplied with such assistance. The pastoral epistles, too, will often supply you with short, telling, and very appropriate answers to the experience of your members, and will prove to be of great service both to yourselves and to them. They abound in hallowed, social intercourse,—in rich religious experience between the members of the church and their pastors.

“To receive what they are willing to give toward the support of the Gospel.” This is part of the weekly service rendered in immediate connection with the prosperity of the soul. This is *religious* giving,—giving “to the Lord;” and the two points must never be separated from each other. A custom has grown up in some classes of *paying* “a lump sum” once in the quarter,

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but I have never yet been able to see that this is the more excellent way. Others *pay* at the end of the quarter, so much for "class," and so much for "tickets;" phrases which, however lightly they may be thought of, carry with them the idea of a stipulation between the parties concerned. I have no doubt the custom has grown up innocently enough, and without any design of its secular character. "How much do you *pay* for your ticket?" is a question that has ever sounded harshly in my own ears, as seeming to partake more of a *bargain* than of a *religious privilege*. I knew an estimable Leader in Yorkshire—a comparatively young man—who was what we call well-to-do in the world, and who could as well have "paid a lump sum" at the end of the quarter as not, but for the sake of example, and, moreover, because of the requirement of the "Rule" I am now referring to, he preferred giving a sovereign per week in the class, and five pounds at the renewal of his quarterly ticket. The *weekly* contribution, in St. Paul's day, was enjoined upon *every one*. Some of them, no doubt, could have

given a "lump sum" once for all, but it was thought best that it should be otherwise given. So I would advise a strict adherence to our old custom, founded very likely on the yet older one of Apostolic times to which I have just referred.

There are other givings in the class, which the minister renewing the tickets will enquire about at the times duly appointed,—namely, the Yearly Collection in the March quarter, and the Worn-out Ministers' and Ministers' Widows' Fund in September. Concerning the former, which is purely for Home Missions,—the spread of the Gospel in our own country,—I once heard the late Rev. Joseph Cusworth say, that when meeting a class in Rochester on one of the occasions here named, he enquired of the Leader, "What do you give to the Yearly Collection?" and his ready reply was, "One guinea; the same as I give to the Foreign Missions:" adding, "I feel it to be my duty to give the same towards the conversion of my own countrymen as towards those in distant lands." The class of which he was the Leader was prosperous in every sense; and

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the family of which he was the honoured head, trained up in the way they should go, became followers of the same Saviour with himself; and when in a good old age he fell asleep, he had the happiness of leaving them possessed with a good hope of meeting him again in the everlasting kingdom above. I will add but one other remark on this point, "Only keep our rules, and they will keep you."

The Leaders' meeting should be regularly attended, and your Class-books examined. By this means the minister presiding is enabled to take note of the sick members, so as to pay pastoral attention to them in their own homes. This is of great importance both to the members and the minister, inasmuch as it furnishes a fine opportunity for spiritual edification and comfort. I well remember a remark of my much loved and venerated Tutor, the late Dr. Hannah, in the Lecture-room at Hoxton, bearing especially on this point. While urging the students never to overlook their pastoral relation to the members, he observed, "I have obtained some of my best and most



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useful thoughts for preaching while visiting the afflicted members of our Society." Much blame has sometimes been given to the ministers for not paying that kind of attention to the members which is so much needed, whereas they have not known anything at all of their state. If, however, your Class-books are brought and examined at the Leaders' meeting the case is met at once, and the neglect complained of is obviated. Moreover, the interest which you profess to have in each other's prosperity, as well as in the state of the Society in general, is lessened by your absence. I hope, therefore, that you will make a point of attending, as a duty not only to the meeting itself, but also to yourselves and your classes.

A due sense of the *responsibility* of your office will be of great service to you in your high and holy calling. A competency of *gifts* will never make up for an incompetency of *grace*; and where grace abounds in the heart there will be a longing desire to bring others to the same fountain of blessing with ourselves. Being largely possessed of this, you will strive not only to keep the numbers

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you already have in your classes, but you will use your influence in trying to bring others to unite with them. Not unfrequently do we find seriously disposed persons in our congregations who only wait for a kind and judicious invitation to bring them into closer fellowship both with Christ and His people. This appears to me to be a work specially claiming the attention of our Leaders, and which they have the finest opportunities of performing. And where the *weight* of responsibility is felt and observed it will be gratefully entered upon. This part of the vineyard in which you labour may become very fruitful by diligent culture, and you may be the happy and the honoured instruments of saving many souls from death. An ever-observant eye will be looking out for new accessions to our numbers, while a heart "full of love divine" will be prompting us to gather wanderers into the fold of Christ. Multitudes have been brought to the Saviour by this kind of agency and effort, and I cannot but think that the fields are still white to the harvest, inviting the labourers to go forth and reap the golden fruit.

You will do well also to impress upon all the members, not only the duty, but the privilege of being present at the Quarterly Visitation of the classes. The connection between the Pastor and his flock cannot be too close and binding, and this is one of the certain means of realizing it. Diligent as we may be in pastoral visitation—by this I mean visiting our people in their own homes—we yet find it sometimes difficult to devote all the time we could wish to this department of our work. If, therefore, the members could be brought together at the stated times for renewing their quarterly tickets, they would have not only the benefit themselves of receiving counsel and comfort from the minister, but also the mutual help which is realized when they that fear the Lord speak one to another in Christian fellowship. I am well aware that circumstances will sometimes arise which tend to prevent the accomplishment of this most desirable object; still it is well to keep it always before us, and strive to the utmost of our ability to overcome them. Much may be done in this direction by a little consideration and fore-

thought. I have sometime known engagements deferred or rearranged on discovering that they had fallen on such times of service, and the parties themselves have felt no difficulty whatever in giving as their reason that the times fixed were those of their "class meeting" or of "ticket giving." I mention this the more freely because, among other *laxities* which have been allowed to creep in amongst us, this one, alas! is too prominent, and ought not to be encouraged. I remember with much pleasure an appointment I once had in a Lincolnshire village to preach, and then to meet the Society for the renewal of their Quarterly Tickets. After closing the double service the Leader, a respectable farmer, named the case of one of his members who had been hindered by affliction from being with us. "He would be very glad, Sir," he said, "if you would call and speak to him, and let him take his ticket from your own hand." The thoughtful request was at once complied with, and I shall never forget the joy of the old veteran, whose tears chased each other down his furrowed cheeks, while he spoke of

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having been a member "hard upon fifty years," and had never taken his ticket except from the minister himself. The hour was late, the night dark, and the journey somewhat lonely, but I would not have lost that opportunity upon any account whatever. I have an imperishable recollection of the sacred joy that filled our hearts while we thus "spake one to another" about the things belonging to our peace.

In the "Cautions and Directions" to which I have already referred, you will find on the 10th page instructions given as to the method of marking the attendance of your members. I make this remark the more freely because I often find Class-books without any attendance being marked respecting certain of the names retained therein. Why this irregularity exists I have never been able to understand, seeing that every conceivable cause of absence is there provided for, and to find a Class-book either in the Leaders' meeting or at the Quarterly Visitation with blanks opposite such names, is sure to create a feeling of disappointment and regret. "Let all things be done decently

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and in order," is a remark which will apply here as well as in all other matters connected with so sacred and important a calling.

I trust, dear brethren, you will receive the counsels I have felt it incumbent upon me to give you, with all possible kindness, as they are offered in all possible sincerity, both for your own sake, and also for the benefit of those who are committed to your care. I want us all to feel that we are co-workers together in this great and blessed service, and that in proportion as we attend to our separate and individual duties, so we may look for the blessing of our Divine Master to rest upon both ourselves and our work.

*Let us pray*

## No. XII.

### CLOSING REMARKS.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

The time is now fast approaching when, according to the rules and usages of the Connexion to which we have the happiness to belong, we must become separated from each other. In harmony with my colleagues who have laboured with me in the Gospel, the time has glided rapidly away, so that with them as well as with yourselves my labours must end for the present. This is one of the peculiarities of the Body,—and one of its glories too. Although no one feels the pang of parting more keenly than myself, I yet would not alter the arrangement upon any account whatever. Among the other things for which I am thankful to God for raising up our venerated Founder,

the Itinerant Ministry holds a prominent and foremost place. I know that it is sometimes pleaded as a disadvantage, and matters of importance are urged in justification of this plea; but having looked carefully into the whole question, examining both sides with scrupulous care, I am bound honestly to say that I am decidedly of opinion it is by far the best thing both for the ministers and the Societies too. If I were to consult my *feelings*, and take the side on which they preponderate, I should come to the opposite conclusion; but I have lived long enough to find out the fact, that to be guided by mere feeling is generally—if not always—a most uncertain, as well as an unsafe course. Great, therefore, as are the disadvantages which are set up against the change, the advantages gained thereby greatly outweigh them.

Yet, although changes take place with us and with our circumstances, there are things which still abide. The Methodist doctrines and the Methodist discipline know no change whatever. These are your inalienable heritage, and the guarantee you have as mem-



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bers of Society in this respect is of greater value to you than gold, and cannot, therefore, be too highly prized. Such a guarantee in other sections of the church of Christ would be of inestimable value, but, alas! it is rarely, if ever, possessed. I should like for you all to look thoroughly into this matter, and examine for yourselves this sheet-anchor, this Magna Charta of the Body, so as to assure yourselves *at all times* of its stability and safety.—“Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away.” (Matthew xxiv. 35.)

“Firm as a rock His truth shall stand,  
When rolling years shall cease to move.”

The confidence, therefore, with which I speak on this point is, not because our doctrines are *Methodist* doctrines, nor yet because our discipline is *Methodist* discipline, but because both the one and the other are founded on that imperishable word. Whatever diversity of talent or of administration there may be amongst us as ministers of Christ, and preachers of His

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holy Gospel, we are all one on these all-important and vital points.

You will render much assistance to your ministers, and obtain great spiritual good yourselves, by commending both them and their work to the special care of our great Master, whose we are and whom we serve. Let me advise you to co-operate with them in every possible way in their anxious endeavours to spread the Saviour's name among the unsaved multitudes around you. Methodism has still a great work to do in this nation, and I am not willing that any part of either our agency or our influence should lie dormant and unemployed. It is almost amusing to hear ourselves sometimes spoken of as though we had "had our day," or that we had become "too respectable" to go into the courts and lanes of the city,—into the highways and hedges as we formerly did,—to invite the outcast and the destitute to come to the house of the Lord. "Methodism and the masses" are phrases as applicable to us to-day as they ever were, and I am full of hope that we shall yet see results as great and as glorious as we have ever seen in

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evidence thereof. There is no branch of the one great family,—no section of Christ's church, more adapted in its organization, or in its method of working, to spread Scriptural holiness throughout the land, than the Methodist Conference and Connexion. I once heard the Rev. Dr. Cumming say that, from his own knowledge, carefully gathered, there was no body of people dreaded by the Papists more than the Methodists;—that there were none who would go into cellars and garrets and all other places where access could be obtained, with a view of bringing the erring and the lost to the Saviour of sinful men, as they would. This has been our mission from the first, and it is not less so now than at any former period of our existence. So I want it to continue. Hence my earnest and anxious desire that you should take your part in effecting this most needed object.

The Cornish motto—"One and all"—is one of the most likely methods to adopt in thus usefully extending our influence among our fellow-men. Workers together in the kingdom of our God. Let everything else

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be made subservient to this. Do not let any bickerings or heart-burnings intermeddle with the faithful and continuous prosecution of this great work. The evil one, you know, will not be slow to use any means within his reach to interrupt you herein, and unless you firmly and persistently withstand him, he will assuredly gain his point, greatly to your own discomfort, and to the hindrance of the work of God. I have sometimes feared whether some of our people have sufficiently guarded themselves against the danger of what they call "little things," so as to remain unhurt by their corroding influence. To encourage these "little things" in the heart, instead of driving them hence, will be sure to do mischief; and the longer they are allowed to remain, the greater the mischief will be. Without parleying with them, therefore, in any degree, cast them out at once, and bid them never return again. "Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines : for our vines have tender grapes." (The Song of Solomon, ch. ii. 15.)

I am not forgetful, of course, that I address

Local Preachers, Sunday School Teachers, Tract Distributors, and others, all of whom are engaged in their different departments of service in the Lord's vineyard, and I want to impress upon the minds of you all the necessity of doing your work as unto the Lord, and not to man. Always set about it in good earnest, not in a loose and an irregular manner. "And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: that ye be not slothful, but followers of them, who through faith and patience inherit the promises." (Heb. vi. 11, 12.) Your work is a *work of faith*, and must be so entered upon and prosecuted. This gives a tone and character to your engagement which nothing else can. Not unfrequently you labour amidst the greatest difficulties and discouragements; yet you are confident that, if it be diligently and faithfully performed, it must succeed. To yield to either the one or the other would betray a weakness of faith which would not be to your credit, and which would expose you to the reproach of *not* being workmen that need "not to be

ashamed." Thus it is that "ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise." (Heb. x. 36.) Let me, therefore, entreat you to avoid all kinds of fitfulness and sudden impulse, and by a steady, consistent course, urge your way onwards in the *full assurance of hope* UNTO THE END. Be not weary in well doing : for in due season ye shall reap, if ye faint not. (Gal. vi. 9.)

"Slothfulness," says Baxter, "is a sin that loseth the precious gifts of God. Our faculties and our members are His gifts and talents, which we have committed to us to use for His service, so are our goods and all that we have ; and shall we hide them in a napkin, or idly neglect to use them ? O, what abundance of excellent mercies lie useless and idle, because you are idle that should use them ! Every hour that you lose in idleness, what noble faculties, and large provisions are all laid by ! As much as in you lieth, you make the whole creation to be and work in vain. Why should the sun shine an hour or minute for you in vain ? Why should the earth bear you an hour in

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vain? Why should the springs and rivers run for you an hour in vain? Why should the air refresh you an hour in vain? Why should your pulse beat one stroke in vain; or your lungs once breathe a breath in vain? Shall all be at work for you to further your work, and will you think that idleness is no sin?"

Again:—"All the time is lost that you are idle in. Yea, when you are at work, if you do it so slothfully, you are losing much of your time. A diligent person will go further and do more in an hour, than the lazy flesh-pleaser will do in two. When the slothful is praying, or reading, and working in his calling, he is but losing half his time, which diligence would redeem. And is our time so short and precious, and yet is idleness an excusable sin? What! loiter so near night, so near eternity, when we have but a little time to work? O, work while it is day, for the night is coming when none can work." I can add nothing to this, except to implore you—which I earnestly do—to get it inwrought into your spiritual life, and to seek *daily* for Divine assistance to enable you to put it

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into practice. Of one thing I am quite sure : you will never regret having done it, for it will bring glory to God, and blessing to your own souls.

And now, my dear friends, let me “commend you to God, and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.” In such keeping you will be always secure. Whatever trials or temptations may beset you in your onward course, they can do you no harm ; for it is your omnipotent Lord who says,—“My grace is sufficient for thee.” (2 Corinthians xii. 9.) His arm, though unseen, will conduct you safely through them all, and bring you to the home He has gone to prepare for you above. Never forget that you “walk by faith, not by sight.” And while you are thus walking you can say with the utmost confidence,—

“Thee, Son of Man, by faith we see,  
And glory in our Guide ;  
Surrounded and upheld by Thee,  
The fiery test abide.”



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To endure as seeing Him who is invisible, has always been the high privilege of believers, and I trust that none of you will ever allow yourselves to do otherwise. Some of you at least, if not all, have been accustomed to sing in the house of your pilgrimage,—

“Let trial and danger my progress oppose,  
They only make heaven more sweet at the close ;  
Come joy or come sorrow, whate’er may befall,  
A home with my God will make up for it all.

“With a scrip on my back, and a staff in my hand,  
I march on in haste through an enemy’s land ;  
The road may be rough, but it cannot be long,  
And I’ll smooth it with hope, and cheer it with song.”

Thus let us gird up the loins of our mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ. (1 Peter i. 13.) The prize is already in view,—“the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” (Philip. iii. 14.) Soon, very soon, perhaps, some of us may be summoned to take it, and to live in its blest enjoyment *for ever*.

For myself and my family I should like

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our leave-taking to be somewhat in the following order :—

“ Love us, though far in flesh disjoin’d,  
Ye lovers of the Lamb ;  
And ever bear us on your mind,  
Who think and speak the same :  
You on our minds we ever bear,  
Whoe’er to Jesus bow ;  
Stretch out the arms of faith and prayer,  
And lo ! we reach you now.

“ The blessings all on you be shed,  
Which God in Christ imparts ;  
We pray the Spirit of our Head  
Into your faithful hearts.  
Mercy and peace your portion be,  
To carnal minds unknown,  
The hidden manna, and the tree  
Of life, and the white stone.

“ Let all who for the Promise wait,  
The Holy Ghost receive ;  
And, raised to our unsinning state,  
With God in Eden live !  
Live till the Lord in glory come,  
And wait His heaven to share :  
He now is fitting up your home :  
Go on ;—we’ll meet you there.”

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